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## Reasons to Live: Legend, Peter Gabriel, The Thaw

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Krummi Björgvinsson of Legend. Ben Rayner dubs them "grim Icelandic electro-miserablists."

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By **Ben Rayner**  
Pop Music Critic

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• **Legend**, *Fearless* (Artofact). Ah, here's the perfect antidote to all that forced holiday jollity. Grim Icelandic electro-miserablists **Legend**, a drama-lovin' duo featuring sometime Minus vocalist Krummi Björgvinsson and tech whiz Halldor Björnsson, released their debut album, *Fearless*, in their homeland last spring, but it's just been given a re-release well timed to the dark winter months by Toronto label **Artofact Records**. Good call on Artofact's part, too, because this is way too good and way too much perverse fun to have been left languishing in semi-obscurity. Legend flaunts its Goth credentials early on with the dour industrial clatter of "Benjamite Bloodline" — and, indeed, throughout a tirelessly downbeat program fraught with references to "falling into my own grave" and walking empty streets pondering death — yet

there's a slinky pop melodicism to much of *Fearless* that should render it appealing to listeners outside the tribe. Depeche Mode at its most black-hearted and just-before-the-wheels-came-off KMFDM at its most whimsical come to mind while listening, but there's a dancefloor-attuned sexiness to cuts like "City" and "Devil in Me" that recalls fellow Icelandic electronic ensemble GusGus. The genuinely lurid "Lust" ("You started touching your crotch / Screaming naked lust") and the Nine Inch Nails-worthy histrionics of "Virgin," meanwhile, prove that being cold and alone and obsessed with the End of It All in the middle of the North Atlantic doesn't necessarily make one immune to the (ahem) baser instincts.

• **Peter Gabriel**, *So 25th-anniversary Immersion edition* (Geffen/Universal). I feel confident, having this year crossed the threshold from my mid-into-late-30s, in declaring that Genesis's appeal will elude me for as long as I live. Don't get it. Still don't get the freaky Peter Gabriel Genesis despite much trying over the years, and I definitely still don't get the ghastly Phil Collins Genesis.

Nevertheless, while my little brother was tormenting me with *Invisible Touch* from the adjacent room during the summer of 1986, I was spending countless hours immersed in the peculiar pop artistry of Gabriel's solo mega-hit *So*. This is a strange record to have met with such enormous popular success, and the heady mix of bent funk, undulating worldbeat textures and avant-garde prissiness Gabriel cooked up in the studio with producer Daniel Lanois still doesn't sound like much out there besides itself.

The four-CD, two-DVD, double-LP "Immersion" box-set reissue is, perhaps, a bit extreme for all but the most ardent *So* obsessive — the raw demos cut together on the "DNA" disc are interesting, but barely listenable — but it is nice to sink into a vinyl recording of "Mercy Street," and the live material is pretty hot thanks to the ace touring band of bassist Tony Levin, guitarist David Rhodes, keyboardist David Sancious and drummer Manu Katche that Gabriel took on the road with him at the time.

• **The Thaw**. Snagged this fun, if kinda-derivative, Canadian horror flick for \$5 in a second-hand DVD rack last weekend because Sam Raimi's "Ghost House Underground" series has been good to me in the past — hunt down *The Children*, by the way, if you're in the mood for more creeps — and was well pleased with my investment. A team of arctic researchers led by an eco-activist with Big Statements on the brain (played by Val Kilmer) finds a mammoth corpse stuffed with creepy-crawlies poking out of the ice and very quickly finds itself with a gruesome infestation on its hands. Think *Cabin Fever* with skittering bugs that lay their eggs in unwelcome parts of your body instead of a virus and you've a good idea already where this goes. Tense and bloody, just the way we like it.

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