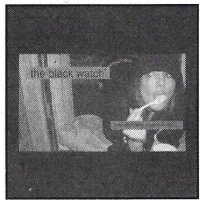


(**TOMAS KALNOKY**) performs inspired acoustic versions of Smith's creations, harnessing the get-up-and-go of the split LP's "Shantantitty Town" and converting "Hokum All Ye Faithful" into charming Belle & Sebastian loveliness. Then Smith sets Kay's fine three ablaze, with all his eager esprit on (with Gray Beast) "The Hand That Thieves" and the caterwauling "A Better Place, a Better Time." He's so vivacious, you wonder how he perpetually summons such verve, *grabbing* songs in perpetual pogo around a room, his quick-firing delivery dazzling. Talent... so rare/elusive, but so wonderfully, thankfully obvious! (pentimentomusic.com)

22 the black watch

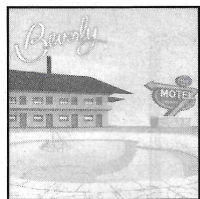
SUGARPLUM FAIRY, SUGARPLUM FAIRY  
(POP CULTURE PRESS)



**JOHN ANDREW FREDRICK** intends this as the final tBW LP, which is understandable on a commercial, not artistic level. Perhaps the even dozen he's eked out to negligible notice since 1988 with various L.A. lineups will become cult/collector crazes someday hence; whatever, let's salute a high quality career, right to this end. **BEATLES** experts recognize *Sugarplum's* title; it's how **JOHN LENNON** counted out "A Day in Life" (instead of "1-2-3-4"), and that multi-faceted *Sgt. Pepper* closer educes the oxymoronic "simple complexity" of Black Watch favorites. Frederick sings prominent melodies in basic indie-pop structures, layering in demanding influences: the buzz of modern noise pop (*Sugarplum* uses fuzzier guitar than usual), the poetic spare-ness of Go-Betweens and Felt, the dissonance of MBV, and the crispness of Neil Young ("Quietly Now"). Lyrics remain a forte, too; the wry regrets of "Dear Dead Love" and standout "There You Were" befit his proficiency as an entertaining novelist, too. Hail and farewell, JAF. (facebook.com/popculturepressrecords; facebook.com/theblackwatchmusic)

23 beverly

CAREERS  
(KANINE)

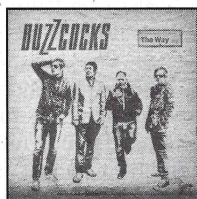


Like Pavlov's pup, or a happy gambler hitting the same bet, **FRANKIE ROSE** keeps paying off. (Nowadays, that's true of *all* ex-members of her onetime **VIVIAN GIRLS!**) Beyond her Zelig/Forrest Gump-like work with The VGs, **CRYSTAL STILTS**, and **DUM DUM GIRLS**, her three

calmer '00s solo LPs are keepers, and now there's this terrific hookup helping touring mate (**AVAN LAVA's**) **DREW CITRON**. Singer/songwriter Citron is the force—Rose returns to her former drum-stool, though her relaxed harmonies make the pair sound preternaturally like one double-tracked voice. Indeed, Rose couldn't tour *Careers*, so Citron assembled fresh players. Yet, like two other Vivian Girls alumnus' greats, **LA SERA's** *Hour of the Dawn* and **UPSET's** *She's Gone*, *Careers* kills because it marries the speedy early VG's violent, tinpot J&MC guitar grind with classic Girl Group-groping melodics, such as the burning "Planet Birthday" and low-rumbling, floor tom-pumping, ascendant "You Can't Get it Right." Oh yes, they can. (kaninerecords.com)

24 buzzcocks

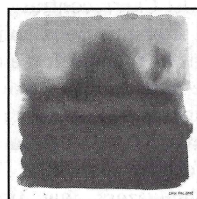
THE WAY  
(1-2-3-4 GO!)



Having not made an LP in eight years, eternal Brit punk/pop gods **PETE SHELLEY** and **STEVE DIGGLE** sound remarkably refreshed on Buzzcocks' ninth (sixth since reforming in 1989). One key is newer, younger backing since 2004's *Flat Pack Philosophy*; bassist **CHRIS REMMINGTON** and drummer **DANNY FARRANT** re-add some rapid-fire precision/muscle/edge like hallowed late '70s originals, **STEVE GARVEY** and **JOHN MAHER**. And how curious to encounter **CURE** (*The Top* through *Wish*) and **CHAMELEONS** (*Strange Times*, *Why Call it Anything*) producer **DAVID M. ALLEN's** darker sound? Mainly, though, it's *The Way's* topnotch tunes, the pair's most consistent since 1993's *Trade Test Transmissions*. Shelley's spiky, high-register "The Way" and high-velocity "Virtually Real" tap his legendary strengths, while unsung Diggle's zinging "People Are Strange Machines" and a remake of 1981's "In the Back" (demoed with Maher and Garvey for a scrapped fourth LP before the band split, released on **FLAG OF CONVENIENCE's** 1988 compilation, *War on the Wireless Set*) are typically sharp-elbowed. Never mind an approaching 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary; Buzzcocks still show "the way." (1234gorecords.com)

25 omi palone

OMI PALONE  
(FAUX DISCX/NEGATIVE SPACE U.K.)



This London four is still another—so omnipresent, this decade!—that could've made

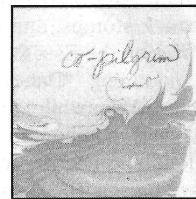
their records in the post-punk '80s instead. Heck, Britain and Brooklyn are spawning them regularly like rabbits. So let's focus on the cut above, and Omi Palone are sharp as tacks. Reviews struggle to pinpoint their customary jump 'n' jangle, but settle, correctly, on New Zealand's Expressway and (the less mysterious, more clashing wing of) Flying Nun labels, with a side order of Dinosaur Jr. and Sonic Youth. I also hear Versus, Wedding Present, The Fall/Pavement, and the pater familia foundation of Velvet Underground's repetition, especially with **PHILIP SERFATY's** bloodless, deadpan delivery. But what's important is the gripping, ripping vitality throughout "Architecture," the cooking "Shallow Divide," and the almost Television-esque guitar duel-ery of "...". With only eight songs, between 2:20 and 3:31, there's nothing wasted, nor divergence from the form; OP let it go, springy-clipped, quick, and keen. (fauxdiscx.com)

26 co-pilgrim

PLUMES  
(BATTLE WORLDWIDE U.K.)

swaying wires

SOME BLUE SKY  
(BATTLE WORLDWIDE U.K.)



*Plumes* is beautiful. Winchester (near Southampton), England's Co-Pilgrims' third LP has a distinct spiritual edge for a secular record, and within that "light pouring into a church window" feel, **MIKE GALE** and mates make weary, divine early '70s pop. Alt. country with lap steel abounds, but it's as if The Beach Boys of *Surf's Up* and *Sunflower* were playing it, with intimations of *Ballad of Easy Rider* Byrds, Rolling Stones' "Wild Horses" ("Heartache Row"), and solo George Harrison ("I Saw You Heavily Girl"); there's also some Big Star (the poppier "Pushover") as Alex Chilton was translated by Nada Surf and Gerry Love's Teenage Fanclub tunes. Gale sings like an angelic cross between Harrison and Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, while ghostly guitar shimmers give the same gossamer ambience as the best recent American record of this type, Honeychurch's *Will You Be There With Me*. *Plumes* is involving, sucking you in like a pleasant dream.

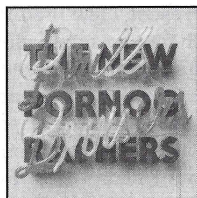
Battle Worldwide also serves some hushed atmospheres with *Swaying Wires*, though the Turku, Finland band have a slightly ominous guitar side they work in amongst the pleasantries. Recording in their rehearsal space over five years, *Some* is mostly a work of the lightest-touched or picked-at guitars, almost as quiet as Low in spots, a bed for **TINA KÄRKINEN** to sing

like a nightingale over (with even a tiny Tanya Donnelly twang in the catch of her throat). Their yin-yang “battle” between the mostly gentle light and interludes of portentous dark makes them unique. (battleworldwiderecordings.com)

27 new pornographers

BRILL BRUISERS

(MATADOR)

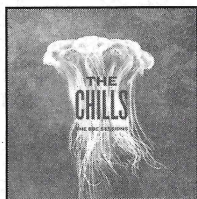


A.C. NEWMAN’s Vancouver supergroup have gotten slower and prettier these last seven years, and I was starting to miss their earlier zip and zing. This new sixth LP strikes a middle ground. In lieu of the comelier, even orchestrated moves of 2007’s *Challengers* and 2010’s *Together*, Brill takes on neo-new wave territory, making better use of hot drummer, **KURT DAHLE** (who left the band after Brill’s release—darn!). The surfeit of quicker-paced, busier, more vintage-sounding New Porns tracks are sure appreciated: “Fantasy Fools” is vintage ELO updated for post-punk, the title track stomps, and **DAN BEHAR**’s caffeinated “War on the East Coast” and the floor-tom pounding “Dancehall Domine” niftily bounce. Meanwhile, some electronic dance and synth components remind of a stranger Blondie, especially when **NEKO CASE** and **KATHRYN CALDER** rule the mic. Overall, Brill’s the vibe of a band rediscovering its former nervous verve, re-injecting an old espresso shot into yet another batch of top tunes. (matadorrecords.com)

28 the chills

BBC SESSIONS

(FIRE)



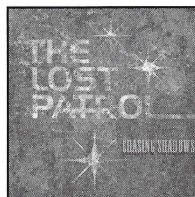
While one pines to hear the new Chills album *Silver Bullets*, completed this year in the wake of 2013’s outstanding comeback single “Molten Gold”—beyond a 2004 EP, there hasn’t been one in 18 years—this look back is a snapshot of a superlative three-year period, when **MARTIN PHILLIPPS** finally brought his Kiwi combo to Europe and America. It’s after early Dunedin days but before signing to major Slash, encompassing two distinct lineups from the multitudes Phillipps’s amassed—those of 1986’s *The Lost EP* and “I Love My Leather Jacket,” and 1987’s first LP, *Brave Words*. And though these three **JOHN PEEL** Sessions previously surfaced on 2001’s triple-CD *Secret Box: Rarities 1980-2000*, including the pre-

viously unheard, sublimely sweet, springy “Christmas Chimes,” they sounded muffled compared to these clear copies. Moreover, BBC bares a better version of the slightly mis-engineered/mixed *Brave Words*, includes two *Submarine Bells* numbers by this prior, different lineup, and reveals extra vim: the validation of hitting London/Maida Vale is plain on this old molten gold. (firerecords.com)

29 the lost patrol

CHASING SHADOWS

(THE LOST PATROL)



I doubt Greater New York’s Lost Patrol had Sheffield’s Comsat Angels’ 1986 LP in mind when they same-named *Chasing Shadows*, but then again, both have moodiness in common—and the tenacity to tinker with customary patterns. Having refined their windswept, darkly enticing, neo-dreampop soundtrack rock (with **MOLLIE ISRAEL**’s mysterious-pretty vocals) on 2011’s *Rocket Surgery* and 2013’s *Driven*, they scrap their drum machines for a real stickman, and, even in the background, **TONY MANN**’s human touch spreads their sound more. And though guitarists **MICHAEL WILLIAMS** and **STEPHEN MASUCCI** Cocteau’s/*Kiss in the Dreamhouse* Banshees base hasn’t changed, they’re stretching out, still, from the Smiths-like (yes!) acoustic-hop of “Trust Me” to the title track’s western twang, to the Chameleons’ power rock float of “Too Hard, Too Fast” and “Hurricane.” (And who else would cover **GRAHAM GOULDMAN**’s obscure 1966 non-hit b-side for **TONI BASIL**, “I’m 28,” the only record she released before 1982’s putrid #1 “Mickey”?) Chase the shadowy goodness. (thelostpatrol.com)

30 martin carr

THE BREAKS

(TAPETE GER)



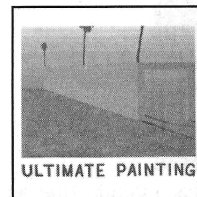
**BOO RADLEYS** fans were sometimes baffled by songwriter/guitarist Carr’s contrary solo **BRAVECAPTAIN** forays after the Boos split in 1999. It was his right to relinquish melodic aptitudes if home-recorded electronica, dub, etc. inspired him more. But since retiring that moniker circa 2006, he’s reclaimed his own—and his former muse. The Boos were wonderful shoegazers that transitioned to Britpop, since their influences were more ‘60s British than ‘80s Ameri-

can, and Carr’s delightful, fulfilling melodies, sung by **SICE**, stuck. So it’s groovy to find him re-exploiting those talents on *The Breaks* (with help from BT’s own, inspired, Boos-loving **CORIN ASHLEY**), his Love/Beattles/soul influence prominent again. One hears allusions to *Forever Changes* on the horn-inflected “The Santa Fe Skyway,” and the exuberance of his Boos’ *Wake Up* work in the guitar-and-keyboard-centric, caustic “Senseless Apprentice,” his singing a mash of Sice and Lennon. Like 2009’s last, welcome return *Ye Gods* (and *Little Fishes*) only better developed/considered, Carr has returned home, Odysseus-like, and it’s a happy party. (tapeterecords.de)

31 ultimate painting

ULTIMATE PAINTING

(TROUBLE IN MIND)

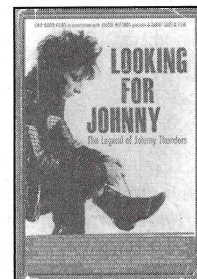


The third band and third LP featuring London guitarist/singer **JAMES HOARE** in 20 months is nearly as great. Each is a successively quieter, gentler, subtler iteration of his primary concern, **VERONICA FALLS**, whose supreme second LP *Waiting For Something to Happen* appeared in February 2013. (Ongoing, they’ve gigged as recently as August.) Having teamed with **MAX CLAPS** in **PROPER ORNAMENTS** for the also-terrific *Wooden Head* in July, he pairs here with **MAZES** mainman **JACK COOPER**. Together, *UP* lays bare Hoare’s Velvet Underground fixation, by stripping out the denser heart and shadowy neo-Flying Nun vibrations the others supply. Specifically, we’re strictly talking the lighter, tickling-insistent “There She Goes”/“Beginning to See the Light” Velvets—not their other flavors—right from *UP*’s opening riff, which borrows broadly from “What Goes On.” But rather than annoy, the LP delights, thanks to Hoare’s typically game-saving harmonies, and the trance all this careful guitar picking/pricking produces. Hey James—wanna try for four? (troubleinmindrecs.com)

32 various

LOOKING FOR JOHNNY; THE LEGEND OF JOHNNY THUNDERS (DVD)

(JUNGLE/MVD)



If anyone deserves a pro documentary, it’s Thunders, because—what a story! Having