

# 'Masters' of metal return to the 'Burgh

BY BRIAN KRASMAN

It seems like every other young metal band that comes out these days is trying to do something tricky and mathematically weird and challenging, but it ends up sounding like madness and not art. Luckily, the masters have returned to show them how it's done.

The Dillinger Escape Plan, the band that basically invented the math-core sound (even if they weren't trying to do that) have returned with a scorching new record, "One of Us Is the Killer," their fifth album and first under the Sumerian label, in partnership with their own Party Smasher Inc. imprint.

Those who have gotten used to DEP's sound of late, which combines molten lava-style metal punishment along with more melodic passages that remind of the heydays of Nine Inch Nails and Faith No More, will be right at home with the new platter. Yet the heavier parts on the album are more volcanic than usual, some of it seeming to refer back to their landmark, genre-creating classic "Calculating Infinity," and the melodic parts have even more texture, with vocalist Greg Puciato really stretching his talent further than ever before. It's one of their most ambitious, yet most balanced records to date, and it's one that should peel the paint off the walls live.

When hinting to guitarist Ben Weinman, one of the most insane figures you will ever see play an instrument live, that the record sounds more aggressive than usual, he ponders the idea for a few seconds

## Dillinger Escape Plan

**Where:** Altar Bar, 7 p.m. Thursday

**Also playing:** Royal Thunder, the Faceless, Black Clouds

**Tickets:** \$18 advance, \$20 at the door

**Info:** ticketfly.com

before reluctantly agreeing. "I kind of like that," he says, laughing about the term. "We don't really go into these things with any idea like that in mind. Every time we finish a record, we never know how we're going to do another one, and we don't really purposely try to make things sound angrier or more aggressive. It's not on purpose. I'd say our records are more like a picture of where we are and who we are at the time."

Weinman, along with Puciato, bassist Liam Wilson, and drummer Billy Whymer (guitarist James Love will join the band for the tour) have set the bar high for other bands trying the same music approach they employ, and as far as physicality, these guys perform like they're fighting invisible forces they must conquer and kill or they'll die on the stage. That has led to many self-inflicted injuries over time, but Weinman says the band has no plans to change their ways.

"As a band, we really don't



Dillinger Escape Plan is on a path to Pittsburgh.

know any other way of doing things," he says. "It's just how we are and what we do. The day we can't do things that way is the day we stop."

It doesn't seem like the finish line is anywhere close, if the new album is any indication. There are tracks such as opener "Prancer," that sounds like it could replace "Panasonic Youth" as the perfect set opener; "Paranoia," a track on which Weinman conducted a 13-piece horn section for the piece and is one of the skronkiest songs in the band's history; and brutal "Crossburner," a total change of pace for the band that finds them delving deep into doom metal

. That's a new one for the band that had them trying a new musical approach for the first time in their history.

"We've never tuned down our guitars before to ever try to get that tone," he admits. "We always looked at a guitar as a guitar, a bass as a bass, and we never wanted to revert to different styles of tuning in order to do certain things in our songs. But we knew we could do this, too, and we're all big fans of doom metal, so it seemed like fun to try something a little different and get something a little more evil sounding."

What DEP is not doing differently these days is putting

together interesting package tours for their headlining jaunts. For the journey that will bring them through Pittsburgh on Thursday, they've assembled a like-minded, math-oriented band the Faceless, who their fans should like a lot, as well as Royal Thunder, one of the hottest underground bands going who are more rock than metal and have extreme music fans salivating over their awesome "CVI" album. Weinman said he doesn't want to assemble a bill of bands that all sound the same, something he always finds boring as a concert-goer.

This summer, DEP will be one of the main attractions at

the annual Summer Slaughter festival (not scheduled to hit Pittsburgh). That bill tends to collect more creative bands with strong musicians and tries not to be a meat-head festival (hello, Mayhem tour), and this year other groups on the tour include the Ocean, Animals as Leaders, Cattle Decapitation, and Norma Jean. The effort is put on by Sumerian, DEP's new home, which was an interesting place for them to land.

It's not that DEP don't fit on Sumerian, because they totally do alongside the label's crop of math-oriented, virtuosic-style metal bands that tend to skew younger. But DEP are an excellent representative for Sumerian, not only to give the label even more credibility but to have a living, breathing role model for new bands to emulate. Weinman was excited to work with them through Party Smasher because they could get help with social media and other aspects of business, plus they maintain their creative independence, a must for the band.

"We hung out with the guys at Sumerian and kind of got to know them," he says. "It turns out they're just really big fans of our band and really wanted to work with us, and they have no interest in changing what it is we do. They didn't want to mess with us."

Who would? If they can exact accidental violence on each other, who knows what they could do to someone trying to interfere with a good thing?

Brian Krasman is a contributing writer for Trib Total Media.

BY JEFFREY SISK

## 'Rkives'

Rilo Kiley (Little Record Co.)

★★★★

As far as I'm concerned, Jenny Lewis can do no wrong. It doesn't matter if she's performing solo or as one-half of the creative brain trust (with Blake Sennett) of indie pop outfit Rilo Kiley, I can listen to her sing all day long. Sadly, there have been no Rilo Kiley records since 2007's "Under the Blacklight" and Lewis' last solo foray was 2008's "Acid Tongue," which means I've been in withdrawal for half a decade. While "Rkives" isn't new material from Rilo Kiley, it's the next best thing. This 17-track dip into the archives (get it?) features B-sides, demos, a remix and a half dozen never-before-heard rarities. By their very nature, these aren't Rilo Kiley's best songs, but they still knock it out of the park on "Let Me Back In," "I'll Get You There," personal fave "All the Drugs," "I Remember You," "Emotional" and "About the Moon" (with the Watson Twins). The Too \$hort remix "Dejalo" doesn't click, but the rest is pure bliss.

## 'True Love and Water'

Erica Buettner (Peppermoon)

★★★★½

Expatriate Erica Buettner calls France home these days, but the 27-year-old's "True Love and Water" debut has all the touchstones of classic American folk music. With a voice that reminds of Judy Collins and Joan Baez, Buettner recorded the 10-track release in her Paris home studio. The songs are lovely, showcasing Buettner's vocals to optimum effect, but the languid pace of the record makes it feel even longer than its 45-minute running time. Highlights include "Time Travelling," the title track, "Our Most Fragile Things" and "A Tale of Norstein."

## 'She Paints Words in Red'

The House of Love (Cherry Red)

★★★★½

Timing is everything. And in the case of the House of Love, unfortunate timing likely kept them from being superstars. The British alt-rockers emerged in the late

# Dirty Fences

BY JEFFREY SISK

## 'Too High to Kross'

Dirty Fences (Volcom)

★★★★

Snarly garage punks Dirty Fences explode out of Brooklyn on rock-solid full-length debut "Too High to Kross." With a sound that pays homage to their musical idols (the Stooges, the MC5, the Ramones), the four members of Dirty Fences gallop their way through the 13-track slab in an efficient 32 minutes. If you're looking to release some anger or frustration, I'd suggest giving "Too High to Kross" a spin. Make sure to crank up the volume as loud as your eardrums (or neighbors) can stand it for maximum effect. Most of the songs here are terrific, with Dirty Fences especially strong



on "All I Want," "What's That Strange?," "Meet Me at the Door," "Under Your Leather," "White Lies" and "Always on My Mind." Can't wait to hear

more from this talented bunch.

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1980s with a string of remarkable albums, but their rise to prominence coincided with the grunge explosion and the House of Love are virtual unknowns to casual music fans. The band split up after 1993's disappointing "Audience With the Mind" and other than a 2005 reunion album, it's been a quiet couple of decades. With original members Guy Chadwick, Terry Bickers and Pete Evans still in the fold, the House of Love are back with "She Paints Words in Red," a 12-track slab they hope will renew interest in the band. Songs like "A Baby Got Back on Its Feet," the title track, "Low Black Clouds," "Trouble in My Mind" and "Holy River" are impressive. The chance at stardom has passed, but the House of Love still have songs left to sing.

## 'Birthdays'

Keaton Henson (Anti-)

★★★★

With a gentle, world-weary voice that makes him sound older than his 24 years, British singer/songwriter Keaton

Henson developed an almost cult-like following in the wake of his 2010 debut "Dear ...". Having battled shyness and stage fright his entire life, Henson's early performances consisted of playing songs one-on-one to a select few listeners. He's since moved on to more conventional approaches, but those early quirks only endeared him even more to his fans. Sophomore effort "Birthdays" has the kind of reflective indie folk tunes that helped make Bon Iver a Grammy winner. Among the many keepers here are "Teach Me," "10 AM, Gare Du Nord," "Lying to You," "Don't Swim," "Beekeeper" and "Sweetheart, What Have You Done With Us." It's not a feel-good album by any stretch, but "Birthdays" is cause enough to celebrate life.

## 'Ministry of Love'

Io Echo (IAMSOUND)

★★★★

I wonder what the throngs at Coachella thought of indie electronic duo Io Echo when they performed at the

renowned festival earlier this month. Because after several spins of the "Ministry of Love" full-length debut from Ioanna Gika and Leopold Ross, I'm still not sold on the twosome. Gika is an accomplished vocalist, but I found my attention wandering over the course of 55 minutes. At their best — "Shanghai Girls," the title track, "Outsiders," "Drag Love" and "Forget Me Not" — Io Echo are an intriguing band. Unfortunately, the album is weighed down by too many clunkers ("When the Lillies Die," "Stalemate," "Addicted") to be an unqualified success.

## 'Black Out the Sun'

Sevendust (7Bros/ADA)

★★★★½

It's been a case of diminishing returns in recent years for Atlanta-based rockers Sevendust, as their last two albums — 2008's "Chapter VII: Hope and Sorrow" and 2010's "Cold Day Memory" — missed the mark. Ninth studio effort "Black Out the Sun" represents a (minor)

bounce back for the veteran band. Frontman Lajon Witherspoon's voice is predictably strong, and Sevendust deliver the fiery goods on "Faithless," "Till Death," "Cold as War," "Decay," "Picture Perfect" and dynamite set closer "Murder Bar," their best song in years. There's nothing terribly original about these 13 tracks, but at least the guys stick to doing what they do best.

## 'Pioneer'

The Band Perry (Universal Republic)

★★★★½

I've got a feeling that the Band Perry is one of those wildly popular outfits that never will be embraced by the critics. There's a meticulously crafted sheen to the country trio and though they'll likely churn out hit after hit, nay-sayers will dismiss them as products of the system rather than first-rate musicians. And that's a shame because "Pioneer," like 2010's self-titled debut, is a wagon load of fun. There's no song as enduring as "If I Die Young" on this 12-track release, but the Kimberly Perry-fronted threesome score with "Better Dig Two," "Don't Let Me Be Lonely," the title track, "Night Gone Wasted," "Chainsaw" and "I'm a Keeper."

## 'Summer Sleeves'

Andrew Leahey & the Homestead (self-released)

★★★★

Andrew Leahey & the Homestead's self-titled debut blew me away last summer, so I had high hopes for "Summer Sleeves." Much more than a placeholder EP, this four-track release builds on the strengths of the full-length and further establishes Leahey as one of the up-and-coming players on the country-rock scene. Opener "Little in Love" sucked me right in, and Leahey kept me enthralled with standouts "Don't Make Me Sad," "Waiting on a Plane" and "Who Wants an Easy Love." At just 20 minutes, I was left wanting more ... but that's about the only complaint I have with "Summer Sleeves."

# Accomplished jazz pianists showcased

BY ERIC SLAGLE

## 'Change of Heart: The Songs of Andre Previn'

Andre Previn (Concord Jazz)

★★★★½

The name Andre Previn should mean something to Pittsburgh residents. He was director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra from 1976-84 and there was a TV show celebrating that relationship called "Previn and the Pittsburgh" that aired on PBS. He's well known for his symphonic work as well as endeavors in theater, opera and film. Previn also is known as an accomplished jazz pianist and it's that side of the artist featured on "Change of Heart." Joined by vocalist Michael Feinstein and bassist David Finck, the songs here date back to the early 1960s. The sound is reminiscent of something one might hear in a small jazz club. It's a laid-back album, thanks largely to Feinstein's controlled singing. On the downside, it is stylistically a bit one dimensional but fans of Previn will no doubt enjoy it.

## 'Jazz Life Forum'

Gerald Clayton (Concord Jazz)

★★★★

It's hard to categorize this release by pianist Gerald Clayton. Lush, lively, somber and complex ... there are a host of adjectives to describe the tracks on "Jazz Life Forum." Interesting horn arrangements featuring saxophonist Logan Richardson and Dayna Stephens and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmure and great vocal tracks from Gretchen Parlato and Sachal Vasandani expand the album's appeal. There's even some spoken word poetry by Carl Hancock Rux. Bassist Joe Sanders and drummer Justin Brown keep the groove going for the whole album, Clayton's first on this label.

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★ Trash it

★★ Bypass it

★★★ Consider it

★★★★ See it

★★★★★ Worship it