



Alice Smith

She Rainwater/Thirty Tigers
★★★★½

A Brooklyn R&B original reintroduces herself

Smith works a nether region 'twix Beyoncé and Norah Jones, no doubt why she wound up in major-label limbo after her eclectic 2006 debut. The equally adventurous follow-up lands in a new R&B world that embraces oddballs like Janelle Monáe and Santigold, whose stylistic freestyles Smith beat to market. She does sultry and cool well. But the hotter – see the Nina Simone-conjuring “She” – the better.

WILL HERMES



Kid Cudi

Indicud Republic
★★★★½

Ex-Kanye protégé keeps it sumptuously dark, kinda drab

Someday this Cleveland MC/producer/former weed enthusiast will find the lyrical and vocal charisma to match the scrumptiously dark, quasi-industrial tenor of his moody beats. But Cudi's pitchy-dawg voice remains his own worst enemy. He has some interesting pals (Father John Misty, Kendrick Lamar, RZA, Too Short), and they are, without exception, welcome presences. Keep your friends close, Cud!

JOE GROSS



No hip-hop, no cry: The new Snoop

Snoop's Righteous Reggae Reinvention

Switching genres after 20 years in the rap game was a crazy move – but Snoop pulls it off

Snoop Lion Reincarnated

Vice/RCA/Mad Decent/Berhane Sound System ★★★★★½



Like Willie Nelson before him, Snoop Dogg finally got so high he made a reggae album. Go ahead, laugh. It really is hilarious to hear him preaching Rastafarian gospel in a fake patois. But here's the thing: For all the easy jokes, *Reincarnated* is Snoop's most consistently enjoyable record in years. A righteous new name wasn't all he brought home from his Jamaican pilgrimage. He also forged a creative partnership with executive producer Diplo, who serves up a tasty swirl of sticky-sweet bass lines and electro crunch. Snoop does the job with surprising grace, stretching his laid-back flow into a blissful croon. There's a winning sincerity to his sunny jams extolling peace, love and gun control; even the weed anthems feel less phoned-in than usual. It's hard not to give it up for such a big, goofy bear hug to the universe.

KEY TRACKS:
“Lighters Up,”
“Fruit Juice”

SIMON VOZICK-LEVINSON



Ghost B.C.

Infestissumam Loma Vista
★★★★

Metal guys salute Satan by complicating their sound

The Swedish metallers raised eyebrows with their Lucifer-loving lyrics, Blue Öyster Cult choruses and their frontman's infernal pope get-up, but on their second LP they embrace something even more unholy: prog. The songs are knotty and complicated; the multivalenced “Jigolo Har Megid-do” feels like it's set not in hell but in Kansas. The results are intricately plotted, if not as instantly bewitching.

J. EDWARD KEYES



Ashley Monroe

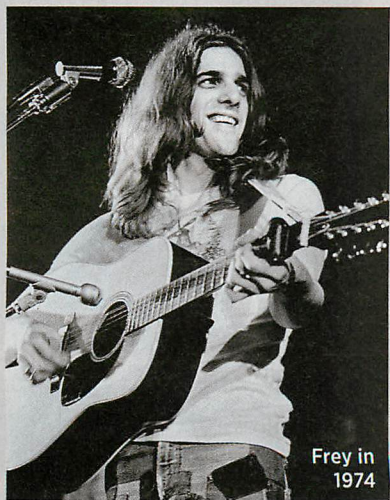
Like a Rose Warner Bros.
★★★★

Rising country star mixes sharp traditionalism with weed and wit

Monroe grabbed country fans with her hard-drawlin' vocals in the Pistol Annies. The beautifully sung, sharp-witted *Like a Rose* is even better. It comes on traditionalist, with old-fashioned production and punch-line-packed honky-tonkers. But beneath the period garb is a modern woman who contemplates loneliness and pennilessness and advocates “weed instead of roses” to revive a moribund sex life.

JODY ROSEN

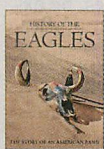
DVDS



Frey in 1974

History of the Eagles

Jigsaw Productions ★★★★★½



The Eagles have a reputation for ruthless business tactics and showing little regard for the contributions of members not named Don Henley or Glenn Frey. This documentary does little to disabuse fans of those notions, but it's still an honest and highly compelling look at the group's history. All seven members share memories of the meteoric rise from Linda Ronstadt's backing group to packed stadiums and piles of cocaine. This is a band that never experienced a moment of failure, yet Henley (“a malcontent,” as David Geffen calls him) and Frey still grind their respective axes, especially when it comes to former guitarist Don Felder, who actually breaks into tears as he recalls his firing. The set includes a bonus DVD of a 1977 gig in Washington, D.C. As always, the Eagles deliver the hits with near-perfect precision.

ANDY GREENE

Last Shop Standing

Proper Music ★★★★★½



This short but passionately sweet documentary traces the rise and fall of the music business through the eyes of the English independent record shop – or, rather, nearly 30 of them across the U.K. Shop owners, industry insiders and icons like the Jam's Paul Weller and the Smiths' Johnny Marr all lend their perspectives on how retailers rode the wave of Elvis, the Beatles, punk and the CD boom, only to perish when the Internet threatened their livelihood and the major labels shifted their priorities into supermarkets. *Last Shop Standing* is not a sad story, though: These are the survivors of the digital revolution, and they tell their tales in thriving stores packed with LPs and other tangibles you can't download. Marr puts his faith in kids who see vinyl as “the deluxe version of this crappy little thing.”

BARRY WALTERS