



## DISCS

LIVE



## Rolling Stones

### Live Licks

Virgin / EMI

We call shenanigans! Since the early '90s, the Stones have stuck to the same game plan — put out a studio album, do a world tour, put out a live album. But with the two-disc *Live Licks* — their eighth concert release — Mick, Keef and the lads are getting ahead of themselves. And pushing their luck. *Live Licks*, taped on their last tour, follows 2002's *Forty Licks* best-of and 1998's live set *No Security*, making it the third compilation since their last studio disc — 1997's *Bridges to Babylon*, if you remember that far back. OK, the performances on this 23-song set are cracking, the set list has left-field entries like *Monkey Man* and *Worried About You*, and the production is vibrant, with Keith and Ron's slashing guitars sharply separated in the mix. But really, how many live versions of *Satisfaction* and *Brown Sugar* do they expect us to buy? Get back to the studio, boys — and near as we can tell, you owe us a double album.

★★★ — DS

COVERS

## Rod Stewart

### Stardust ... The Great American Songbook III

J / BMG

Once was OK. Twice was plenty. But three volumes of Rod Stewart crooning Tin Pan Alley standards is more than anyone should be forced to endure. For those who care, this time out, the raspy old rooster transforms another 14 classics — including *Embraceable You*, *Blue Moon*, 'S Wonderful, *I Can't Get Started*, *Night and Day* and (why, Lord, why?) *What a Wonderful World* — into cocktail-jazz cheese so bland it would bore your granny. Even worse, he drags guests like Eric Clapton, Stevie Wonder, Bette Midler and Dolly Parton down with him. Somebody stop him before he records again — or, even worse, discovers Billy Strayhorn.

★ — DS

## A Perfect Circle

### Emotive

Virgin / EMI

There is something to be said for putting your own stamp on covers instead of blindly Xeroxing other people's songs. There is, on the other hand, little to be said for simply taking a random bunch of oldies — John Lennon's *Imagine*, Marvin Gaye's *What's Going On*, Fear's

## The Donnas

### Gold Medal

Atlantic / Warner

Thank heaven for bad girls — 'cause bad girls get better every day. At least, The Donnas do.

On their sixth album and second major-label release, these California punkettes trade in their Ramones shirts, buy some old Stones albums and get in touch with their inner guitar-rawk goddesses. Leaner, cleaner and sharper than their previous work, *Gold Medal's* dozen cuts find the gals tempering their trademark girl-group brashness with slightly mellower '70s rock and metal grooves, stronger melodies and more laid-back, sultry vocals.

Sure, they still "just want to get you undressed." But instead of just kneeling you in the crotch and ripping off your clothes, Brett Anderson and co. shimmy up beside you, breathe huskily in your ear and talk you out of your trousers — before kicking you out of bed and asking "is that all you've got for me?" Ouch. It doesn't get much better — or badder — than that.

Wish we were as impressed with the DualDisc technology utilized on *Gold Medal*. It's the newest music biz gimmick — CD tracks on one side of a disc, DVD content on the other — but if this set was anything to go by, it's a long way from perfected. The thicker-than-normal disc clattered annoyingly in our player, skipped at the slightest touch, crashed our computer — and most of the CD's final track was missing. According to the record label, the initial run of defective discs had been recalled and replaced in stores. Still, it's a long way the *Gold Medal* performance we had in mind.

★★★★1/2 out of ★★★★★

— Darryl Sterdan



## Willie Nelson

### It Always Will Be

Lost Highway / Universal

Over the past few years, Willie Nelson has made a blues album, a kids' album, and umpteen self-congratulatory live, duet and tribute discs with an endless string of guests. With *It Always Will Be*, though, he's made another kind of album — one you might want to hear more than once.

On this refreshing 14-song outing, the Red-Headed Stranger takes the reins of his career again, assembling and delivering a strong slate of original songs and covers. Willie dishes up some honkytonk frivolity on *I Didn't Come Here (and I Ain't Leavin')*, gently unwraps the simply pretty balladry of the title cut, claims Tom Waits' *Picture in a Frame* as his own, gets jazzy on a couple of cuts (including a duet with Norah Jones), shares a slice of bittersweet heartache with Lucinda Williams and even makes a Toby Keith song sound good.

And by the end of it, he's made his strongest, least forced album since 1998's *Teatro*. Not that that's not saying much, of course.

★★★★1/2 out of ★★★★★

— Darryl Sterdan

*Let's Have a War*, Nick Lowe's *Peace, Love and Understanding*, Devo's *Freedom of Choice*, Black Flag's *Gimme Gimme Gimme* — and converting them all into an identical-sounding batch of creepy, sub-Mansonesque goth-metal dirges.

★★ — DS

HIP-HOP

## R. Kelly & Jay-Z

### Unfinished Business

Island Def Jam / Universal

Who says history never repeats? In 2002, horndog balladeer R. Kelly and rap kingpin Jay-Z tried to marry



hip-hop and R&B on the widely ignored *Best of Both Worlds* — only to see the whole affair implode when Kelly was hit with a raft of sex crime charges. Now, apparently not knowing when to leave well enough alone, they've issued this equally underwhelming followup — which

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actually seems to consist of leftovers from the original sessions, judging by the personnel and recording data. Even better, their joint tour quickly collapsed into violence and jealousy, with Kelly suing Jay for \$75 million after being pepper-sprayed and booted off the bill. "Make up to break up, that's all we do," croons Kelly here with remarkable insight. Guess that means a threeppeat is only a matter of time.

★1/2 — DS

## 2Pac

### Live

### Death Row / Koch

Well, at least we know Suge Knight has a sense of irony.

★ — DS

SOUNDTRACK



## Team America: World Police

### Various Artists

Atlantic / Warner

If Night Ranger did the soundtrack to a Jerry Bruckheimer movie, it couldn't be any more hilarious and over the top than this score to the *South Park* duo's puppet action parody. Except that Trey Parker and Matt Stone are actually trying to make you laugh with spoofish songs like the show-tune *Everyone Has AIDS*, the fist-pumping anthem *America, F\*\*k Yeah*, the power ballad *Only a Woman* and Kim Jong Il's Elton Johnish lament *I'm So Ronery*.

★★★ — DS

UNDERGROUND

## The Catheters

### Howling ... It Grows and Grows!!!

Sub Pop / Outside

If Mudhoney were raised by wolves, their guitars couldn't snarl any fiercer, their drums couldn't bash any harder, their singer couldn't bray any louder — and their CDs couldn't be any more feral and fearsome than the sophomore set from these Seattle garage-punks.

★★★★1/2 — DS

## The Thermals

### F—ing A

Sub Pop / Outside

"This is how we go; soft and slowly," claim The Thermals. Liars. The choppy distorto-punk and yawping emo vocals of this searing sophomore album tell the real story. And they make *F—ing A* a disc that lives up to its title.

★★★★1/2 — DS

## Top Tens

## Pop Singles

1. AWAKE IN A DREAM Kalan Porter
2. YEAH! Usher
3. LET'S GET IT STARTED Black Eyed Peas
4. I BELIEVE Fantasia
5. AMERICAN IDIOT Green Day
6. BALLA BABY Chingy
7. COME CLEAN Hilary Duff
8. EVERYTIME Britney Spears
9. AMAZING George Michael
10. I BELIEVE Diana DeGarmo

Source: Nielsen Broadcast Data Systems

## Local Best-Sellers

1. CHUCK Sum 41
2. STARDUST ... GREAT AMERICAN SONGBOOK VOLUME III Rod Stewart
3. HILARY DUFF Hilary Duff
4. WORDS & MUSIC John Mellencamp
5. CONFESSIONS Usher
6. AMERICAN IDIOT Green Day
7. MIRACLE Celine Dion
8. FUTURES Jimmy Eat World
9. THE CHRONICLES OF LIFE & DEATH Good Charlotte
10. GENIUS LOVES COMPANY Ray Charles

Source: Nielsen SoundScan Canada

## Country Singles

1. IN A REAL LOVE Phil Vassar
2. I HATE EVERYTHING George Strait
3. SUDS IN THE BUCKET Sara Evans
4. THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT Brooks & Dunn
5. MR. MOM Lonestar
6. STAYS IN MEXICO Toby Keith
7. NOTHING ON BUT THE RADIO Gary Allan
8. THE WOMAN IN YOU Kenny Chesney
9. DAYS GO BY Keith Urban
10. BACK WHEN Tim McGraw

Source: Billboard Online

## Music Videos

1. WORDS & MUSIC: GREATEST HITS John Mellencamp
2. PHINALLY PHAMOUS Lil Wyte
3. DISCLAIMER II Seether
4. STREETS IS WATCHING Jay-Z
5. A REALITY TOUR David Bowie
6. MIRACLE Celine Dion
7. PENSANDO EN TI K-Pas de la Sierra
8. ALPHA & OMEGA Bizzy Bone
9. NORTENAS FAMOOSA Los Tigres del Norte
10. STRIPPED: LIVE IN THE U.K. Christina Aguilera

Source: Billboard Online

## Underground

1. ANTICS Interpol
2. SPOOKED Robyn Hitchcock
3. DENTS & SHELLS Richard Buckner
4. LEVIATHAN Mastodon
5. UNIVERSAL AUDIO The Delgados
6. JIMSON WEED Nathan
7. THE WAKING HOUR David Francey
8. NEW ROMAN TIMES Camper Van Beethoven
9. WET FROM BIRTH The Faint
10. FRANK BLACK FRANCIS Frank Black

Source: UMFM 101.5