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REVIEWS

REVIEWS: The Trews, Morcheeba, Los Campesinos! and more

Tuesday February 19, 2008 @ 11:30 AM
 By: [ChartAttack.com Staff](#)



ALPHA GALATES A Stimulus for Reason ([EMI](#))

Alpha Galates specialize in heavy modern rock that should appeal to fans of Nickelback, Finger Eleven and Three Days Grace. Before you clear the vomit from your throat, please be advised that this Toronto five-piece (featuring ex-members of The Hollow) have been gigging steadily for years and their polish translates well in the studio environment. A Stimulus For Reason is the result and the band uses some proggy studio trickery to dress up their tunes real nice. The songs are long and very involved, with two exceeding the 10-minute mark. And yet unlike Meat Loaf's epochal "I Would Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That)," Alpha Galates tend to eschew the drama in favour of big riffs, weird fills and pissy vocals. Think mid-period Metallica as another touchstone, all nicely produced and set forth for modern times. **Cameron Gordon**



photo of the week



THE APES Ghost Games ([Gypsy Eyes](#))

Today's Apes may sound a little different than the group you remember. Back in 2005, after six years and three albums, their lead singer left to start a family and was replaced more or less on the fly. According to the band, they didn't miss a beat, and it's true that Ghost Games has the sound of an outfit that have a clear plan for the direction they're heading. As their name implies, a majority of the tracks start as heavy, lumbering beasts, but tend to morph into Wintersleep-like pop-rock by mid-song. The foursome also play up their ghostly theme with aplomb by inserting sound effects and guitar solos that sound like creaking stairs. Vocally, The Apes are now akin to The Darkness, circa 2003. That, and some retro keyboard flares, give the disc a bit of a classic rock feel. There's not a lot to

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complain about here, but there's nothing groundbreaking either.
Scott Bryson



BON IVER For Emma, Forever Ago
 ([Jagjaguwar](#)/Sonic Unyon)

Justin Vernon, known here as Bon Iver, can kiss his solitude goodbye. For Emma, Forever Ago, which the folk songwriter recorded almost entirely on his own during a winter escape to his father's cabin in rural

Wisconsin last year, is simply too stunning a solo debut for him to hide out now. Introspective acoustic numbers populate the collection for the most part, while the occasional exercise in full-band orchestration — the horn-adorned, slide-guitar gem "For Emma," for instance — illustrate Vernon's future promise. But this record's most mesmerizing quality is its utter and profound intimacy. You can hear Vernon scratch his beard in between guitar strums on "The Wolves (Act I and II)." His rich and soulful falsetto — often multi-tracked — permeates the crevices of these songs in irresistible ways. It can be tough at times to decipher Vernon's enigmatic lovelorn lyrics, but that's just as well, because this is a puzzle well worth spending time on. **Matt Reeder**



THE D'URBERVILLES We Are Hunters
 ([Out Of This Spark](#))

The D'Urbervilles' debut album is anthemic rock music for smart people. What the hell does that mean? It's all demonstrated perfectly in the title track, a three-minute pop song injected with group chanting,

inspirational synths you could do aerobics to, a great chorus and electric guitar wanking. It combines an easy pop-rock formula with indie, dance and humour. Heck, "Dragnet" could be the organ-drenched rock cousin of Justin Timberlake's "Like I Love You." What's so great about this album is that it constantly surprises. Just when the listener thinks the band are slipping into generic rock mode, out come handclaps, disco bass lines and drumming, and vocalist Tim Burton's drab/addictive rhythmic vocal style. The only moments that become worrisome are the few songs that sound Killers-ish, complete with similar synth-rock vibes. But those scary minutes are quickly erased with heavy rockers like "The Receiver," something those Las Vegas lap dogs couldn't pull off if they tried. **Phil Villeneuve**

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DEAD TO FALL Are You Serious? ([Victory](#)/Universal)

Chicago metalcore quintet Dead To Fall's fourth release asks a question and begs listeners to ask the band a similar question: are they serious? The truthful answer is no, they're not. Are You Serious? contains songs about house parties ("Major Rager"), the Loch Ness monster ("Loch Ness") and one of the members' girlfriends private area ("Doombox"). Despite the blatant immaturity in the album title and lyrics such as "I got a really original idea of how we should end this song. End this song, with a fucking breakdown" (from "Stupid?"), this will undoubtedly make your head bob and thrash around. Besides the hilarity of the record, there's some pretty wicked whatever-core going on, and much of it's mixed with futuristic electronic noises like on "The Future." While it might seem that Dead To Fall aren't taking their jobs seriously, they've managed to produce a seriously awesome metal album. Bonus major props to drummer Tim Java.

Logan Broger



DONITA SPARKS AND THE STELLAR MOMENTS Transmiticate ([SparksFly](#))

There's a proper way to deal with the effects of a mid-life crisis and then there's... this. God bless former L7 guitarist/singer Donita Sparks for trying, but then again, God bless every ham-fisted hack with a recording budget and a synthesizer. That doesn't mean they had to do it. Picking up where L7's ill-fated swan song Slap-Happy left off, Transmiticate is a garbled collection of mid-tempo songs without rhyme or reason that struggle to do, well, anything. Dripping in sonic effects and revolving around programmed beats, the majority of songs here — one of which, "Infancy Of A Disaster," is actually pulled from Slap-Happy — plod along pointlessly, coming across as little more than the half-hearted attempts of someone without a plan. Further complicating the mess, most songs feature few vocals other than constant reiteration of the title, resulting in an album with a greater sleep-inducing factor than a political seminar from Jello Biafra. It's sad and shocking that the mind responsible for brilliant blasts of ravenous rock fury such as "Shitlist" and "Fuel My Fire" could be so lost in this wishy-washy electronic bog.

Keith Carman

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FARMERS MARKET Surfin' USSR

([Ipecac](#))

Farmers Market is Mike Patton's newest avant-garde signing and Surfin' USSR is their first album to be released in North America.

This blend of Bulgarian folk music, jazz, surf and everything in between is a farmers' market full of different tastes and flavours coming together on one common ground. It's hard not to wonder if it's all a world music novelty act, but you quickly transcend that into a state of, "Who cares? This is awesome!" In addition to the typical drums, guitar and bass, there's no shortage of saxophone and accordion, normally wussy instruments that are rendered palatable here. "To Hell And Baku" features one of the few musical passages that North American ears might tweak to: a rocking guitar solo over a relatively heavy rhythm section. This is a Market that the musically adventurous will want to visit. **Logan Broger**

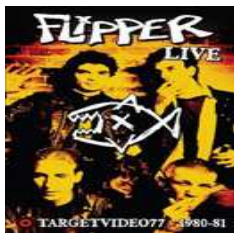


FAREWELL TO FREEWAY

Definitions ([Victory/Universal](#))

For anyone still interested, there are a few avenues left to explore in the otherwise derelict metalcore genre, and it's pleasing to see Guelph, Ontario's Farewell To Freeway setting out to find them, however scarce they

may be. The group don't initially appear to break too far off the path beaten by their Victory labelmates, but the quintet's strengths lie in their melodic side. By incorporating keyboards into the mix, F2F add a tuneful tier to their sound that adds a bit of grace to their chunky, muscular riffs. The vocals come in the form of harmonized hooks and guttural growling. Thankfully, the band switch it up enough to keep either one from getting stale. They may not be blazing new trails for others to follow, but Farewell To Freeway put some effort into keeping metalcore's decaying heart alive. **Shehzaad Jiwani**



FLIPPER Live: Targetvideo77

1980-81 ([MVD](#))

Consummate noisemakers, SoCal's Flipper were never the kind of band you'd put on and rock out to. It was four guys playing Yoko Ono-ish art rock that resulted in more squeals and babbling than verses or choruses. They

were punk rock in attitude, if not musically. And as time pushes us further and further from their early '80s "heyday," memories fade. We forget that they represented a cacophony even Sonic Youth couldn't stomach. With this live DVD compiling two shows in Berkeley and San Francisco, California, we realize that five minutes of Flipper — let alone 70 — is more than enough for a lifetime. Being shot with multiple cameras and featuring 5.1 Dolby

doesn't mean much when a band stands around lazily and lets feedback do most of the aural dirty work. If anything, this footage is affirmation that Flipper were nothing more than a musical virus that should never be revived. **Keith Carman**



GRAND ARCHIVES The Grand Archives ([Sub Pop/Outside](#))

Grand Archives' singer/guitarist Mat Brooke is known for his work with Band Of Horses and Carissa's Wierd, but until now, few have heard the lighter — and better — side of his artistic vision. The debut from the

Seattle-based quintet features 11 happy songs (whistling included on "Miniature Birds") that are reminiscent of Brooke's previous work with Carissa's Weird, a band in which he was a focal point in the songwriting process. The majority of the songs feature different instruments — piano, saxophone, harmonica, you name it — that make you want to hum along in enjoyment. This is an impressive debut that won't have Brooke wishing he were still in one of his previous outfits, and one that will go down in the archives as a grand addition to Seattle's music scene. **Logan Broger**



GRAVEYARD S/T ([Tee Pee](#))

About once a year some group of greasy-haired acid casualties slip out of a rift in space and time to churn out a piece of cosmic metal that kidnaps and transports you back to 1971 via an intergalactic boogie van complete with airbrushed topless mermaids

wielding swords painted on the sides. This year it's some Swedish cats named Joakim, Rikard, Svala and Axel who make up the band Graveyard. The most masterful thing about the band's self-titled debut isn't their early Sabbath recreationism, it's their sense of restraint. In an age where heavy music has deteriorated into an exercise in mindless speed, screaming and excess, song combos like "Blue Soul" and "Submarine Blues" succeed as one-two punches built on the slower propulsiveness of the first setting up the pointed riffage of the second. Rockers have a new contender worthy of patching on to their jean jackets. **Aaron Brophy**



HORRORPOPS Kiss Kiss Kill Kill

([Hellcat](#)/Epitaph)

If you're a sucker for shtick, Danish surf punks HorrorPops might be for you.

Appropriating styles from The Cramps and The B-52s and sounds from The Avengers, X and hundreds of other bands, HorrorPops offer some unoriginal, brainless fun on Kiss Kiss Kill Kill. With their black exteriors and considerable haircuts, you'd expect Horrorpops' music to be pretty extreme, but there really isn't much of an edge beyond your typical pop-punk fare. This isn't necessarily a bad thing because the band have a definite knack for writing a good solid hook as "Thelma & Louise," "Everything's Everything" and "Highway55" demonstrate. Vocalist Patricia Day sounds like a less menacing Siouxsie Sioux throughout and would make a fine role model or first crush for teenagers attempting to find themselves by wearing black nail polish and perhaps contemplating a tattoo. **Cameron Gordon**



KULA SHAKER Strangefolk ([Cooking Vinyl](#)/Koch)

Remember when Blur and Oasis were feudin', Spacehog had the best hair, and every time your friends got drunk you sang "Champagne Supernova?" Kula Shaker were the '90s Brit-rockers who drew their

psychedelia straight from its spiritual source. I'm talking about India, not LSD. (OK, maybe a little bit from LSD.) The transcendental rock 'n' rollers are back and their new album makes it sound like the eight years since Peasants, Pigs, And Astronauts were nothing but a blink of an eye for Crispian Mills and his gang. They're still rocking for peace and love and chanting mantras to driving backbeats and trippy fuzz guitars. Strangefolk doesn't let itself go too crazy, though. Its rock and psych elements are neatly reined in by responsible pop construction. This style of music isn't as trendy as it was during Kula Shaker's first tour of duty, but there's something about the siren song of a chattering tambourine that's hard to deny. Plus, when you consider all the empty-hearted bullshit in pop music today, you have to admire a band with a philosophical agenda.

Evan Dickson



KURT COBAIN: ABOUT A SON (Sidetrack/[Shout Factory](#))

Forget for a moment that Kurt Cobain was the frontman for one of the most influential rock bands of the last 30 years. Also ignore the fact that he killed himself when he was 27.

Not so easy to do, is it? Remarkably, director AJ Schnack's film about Cobain's life actually manages to cut

through all the misplaced hero worship and sensationalized rumours that have characterized the glut of films about the singer over the past decade or so. It achieves this in three key ways: the film is narrated entirely by Cobain thanks to 25 hours of audiotape interviews recorded by noted music journalist Michael Azerrad while researching for his book *Come As You Are*; the audio is backed by gorgeous and freshly shot images of the places mentioned in Cobain's narrative; and finally, Schnack soundtracks it all with music that inspired the singer during each juncture of his life (nary a note of Cobain's own music is to be found). They're presented in roughly chronological order, leaving viewers to fill in the blanks for themselves instead of being handed a predetermined picture of the singer. **Matt Reeder**



LOS CAMPESINOS! Hold On Now, Youngster ([Arts & Crafts](#)/EMI)

There was a short-lived trend a few years ago where a large sect of indie rock bands wanted to make music you could really dance to. Los Campesinos!, with their infectious, desperate gang vocals and noisy instrumentation, could bring the trend back. Their full-length debut is lyrically engaging — the song titles alone ("We Are All Accelerated Readers," "...And We Exhale And Roll Our Eyes In Unison") are worth the price of admission — and the vocal interplay between Gareth and Aleks Campesinos! should be enough to get the hipsters shaking this summer. If there's one complaint, it's that the band never really take a breath, and listening to all 12 tracks in one sitting can be a little mind-bending. But Los Campesinos! wouldn't have it any other way. They're itching to get your party started and are hardly willing to let tempo get in their way. **Noah Love**



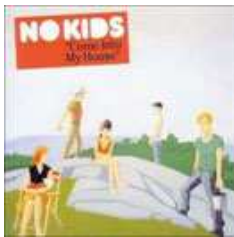
MORCHEEBA Dive Deep ([Ultra](#))

Nineties trip-hoppers Morcheeba managed to find a space in time that they loved, so stuck with it on their newest effort. Dive Deep could have easily been released in 1998 alongside their most successful material. Sadly, someone forgot to tell them it's 2008. Though there are an army of more organic instruments, Dive Deep remains a sleepy pop album aided by sleepy guest vocalists, sleepy melodies... zzz... zzz... Sorry, I just fell asleep writing that sentence. Even the hip-hop Rhodes jam "One Love Karma" feels tired with New York's Cool Calm Pete rhyming about keeping all things copasetic. And that's perhaps the record's main downfall. There's nothing remotely challenging or interesting on this album. With the exception of "Au-Dela," a haunting Air-style French lullaby, Dive Deep is lounge music for the lazy. **Phil Villeneuve**



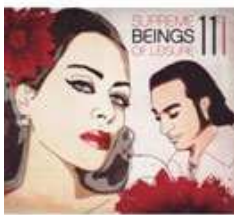
THE MOUNTAIN GOATS Heretic Pride ([4AD](#)/Beggars)

The Mountain Goats have always been a few popularity notches below their peers in The Shins and Spoon, despite their stylistic similarities and the comparable quality in songwriting. In spite of his permanent underground standing, lead Goat John Darnielle continues to soldier on and provide listeners with quality full-lengths such as Heretic Pride. The disc bears the same sensitive trademarks that Darnielle has built a career upon and, unlike the S-bands mentioned earlier, he's careful to not overproduce when given the resources. In lieu, he presents tunes like "Sax Rohmer #1" and "So Desperate" in all their naked glory, unadorned aside from a few tasteful flourishes and studio-based burps. It's a simple-yet-effective formula that the Goats can ride to acclaim once again. **Cameron Gordon**



NO KIDS Come Into My House ([Tomlab](#))

Is it a way to describe aging band members? A statement of their position on parenthood? There are two things we do know for sure: 1. No Kids are three of the four members of Vancouver pop outfit P:ano. 2. Come Into My House is 12 tracks of unabashedly showy soft pop that creates the once-thought-impossible amalgamation of Prince-meets-Backstreet Boys-meets-Yo La Tengo. This is the kind of stuff you'd want to listen to while baking a cake or gardening. It's relaxing, motivating and more than a little intriguing. Countless instruments are employed to accompany the mostly programmed beats, but none of the songs suffer from clutter; each sound sticks around only as long as it must in order to make its presence felt. The R&B hooks are often cringe-worthy, but if you're in the market for a new guilty pleasure, No Kids are worth a listen. **Scott Bryson**



SUPREME BEINGS OF LEISURE 11i ([Rykodisc](#)/Warner)

Electro-lounge also-rans Supreme Beings Of Leisure are one of those bands that popped up during the late 1990s electronica "explosion" and haven't quite gone away. 11i is their first album in six years and from the sounds of things, not much has changed in the interim. The songs bubble and zip along (in a tasteful manner) as vocalist Geri Soriano-Lightwood gets all sexy-like with her breathy vocals. It's actually the more restrained tracks that tend to work as tunes such as the peppy "Good" lay on the instrumentation a tad too

thickened, in the process sounding like Evanescence or Garbage. The moodier sounds of "This World" and "Pieces" are much preferred and most certainly the type of choice to make if you're looking to complement the Portishead and Thievery Corporation folders on your iPod. **Cameron Gordon**



THE TREWS No Time For Later ([Universal](#))

The Trews have grown up. No Time For Later is a far more assured and cohesive effort than the scrambled mishmash of 2005's Den Of Thieves. Their music is still anthemic and radio-friendly, but John-Angus MacDonald's guitar work has a distinctive roots rock flavour to it this time while vocalist Colin MacDonald's delivery is more controlled and his lyrics more fully realized. The band haven't abandoned the sound that made them popular, yet there's a perceptible change in the band's approach to that sound. They've held onto those big bombastic songs, and some of them are still about girls, but now, not every song is about girls. "Gun Control" stands out for its uncharacteristic political bent, delivered with a hefty dose of guitar crunch. The Trews might've been reluctant to "go" in the past, but they're now confidently growing into their music with this assured step forward. **Matt Littlefair**

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