

tea and a decent read. Periodically a contemporary musician drifts into this end-of-the-week lineup (Elliott Smith, Tim Keegan, Tobin Sprout), and with the release of *Retriever*, Canadian singer/songwriter Ron Sexsmith fits nicely into the rotation. With a folky, soulful sound, Sexsmith's seventh album perfectly complements a warm mug of Earl Grey. —Don Simpson

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Shearwater

Winged Life
(Misra)

Shearwater's lush yet uncluttered arrangements provide the perfect backdrop for singer Jonathan Meiburg, who's also known for his work with Okkervil River (Okkervil's leader, Will Robinson Sheff,

is also a member here). His voice has the slightly wounded tone of a man who has seen too much, but Meiburg's willingness to share his stories is what makes *Winged Life* so engaging. It's a deeply personal and confessional record that never gets bogged down by excessive melancholy. Shearwater know how to turn ugly experiences into beautifully sad ones. —Mike Alexis

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The Silent League

The Orchestra, Sadly, Has Refused
(File-13)

Helmed by ex-Mercury Rev keyboardist Justin Russo, chamber-pop ensemble The Silent League are cut from the same velveteen cloth that once dabbed sweat off the furrowed brows of Stephin

Merritt, Cole Porter and piano-bar⁸ recluse Plush. Their huge membership (it hovers around a dozen members at any given time) may bring to mind The Polyphonic Spree, but for the most part this is a lush and dulcet affair that often echoes the wonderment and longing of Russo's former employer. Russo is possessed of a warbling tenor reminiscent of Wayne Coyne or Jason Lytle, and though he ruefully spills his guts about the loves of his life (the radio being the most pervasive), his merry marching band is always there to pick him up and dust him off with tunes so triumphant they were surely college fight songs in a former life. —Jason Jackowiak

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Belle & Sebastian

Fans Only
(Matador)

A smart, rather shy lot who make the soft-spoken Undertones look like Black Sabbath, Belle & Sebastian come off as unlikely pop stars on *Fans Only*, which is obviously a big part of their appeal. Their homemade videos (which run the gamut from boring crap to charming to very funny) are interspersed with interview clips, live footage and TV appearances. There's also a segment featuring Isobel Campbell walking her dog in the park that is sure to be discussed in tearrooms and dreamed about fondly in the finer prison cells. Many of the best moments come in the second half, especially when the Scots tour Brazil and appear on a TV program, which plays like an episode of "The Odd Couple" starring the wildly divergent personalities of two nations. I'm a big B&S fan, and there's a ton of stuff here to enjoy, but this left me wanting more. Hmm, maybe that's the point. Clever bastards.

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Can

Can DVD
(Mute/Spoon)

Can are one of those bands that people used to talk about and now they actually listen to. When I was growing up, Bowie was always touting Can, but you couldn't find their records anywhere. Their evolution from an off-kilter, often exciting Teutonic rock act into an increasingly dispassionate avant-garde and pre-electronica act is perfectly illustrated on this impressive double-DVD set. There's so much Can here that it took multiple days and nights to watch it all. After 93 hours, I thought I'd put Can to bed, but then I discovered that the discs double as CD-ROMs that give you even more Can. Beyond satisfactory, *Can DVD* is the first set I can think of that actually covers everything you want and/or need from a great band.

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The Cramps

Live At Napa State Mental Hospital
(Music Video Distributors)

This 1978 concert at a mental hospital has taken on such a mythic aura that I assumed it was just that—a myth. But holy smokes! The Cramps really did play smack dab in the center of a room full of the severely mentally ill (including a phalanx of plump, middle-aged women with summer dresses and mustaches who clutch their purses and dance). The audience digs the show so much that an ever-increasing number of people hug Lux Interior before grabbing his mic and screaming unintelligibly into it. I assumed one punk woman in leopard-print Capri pants was part of the Cramps entourage until she, too, went for the microphone. Not only is this a good concert, it also offers a pretty good window into the 1970s, a time when public-health officials made brave entertainment choices and anti-psychotic drugs weren't nearly as powerful as they are now.

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Josh Rouse

Fact/Fiction
(Rykodisc)

With everyone stealing music these days, record companies have started padding albums with DVDs in order to give fans added value. An example of this can be found with Josh Rouse's fine record *1972*, which includes a bonus documentary with artfully shot concert footage, interviews with members of Lambchop and Departure Lounge, and a scene with Rouse making BBC's Janice Long cry by singing a song. The best part is when a guy says that in the mid-'90s he and Rouse decided to trade favorite CDs. The guy handed over a stack of the usual indie-rock stuff and Rouse gave him one Hall & Oates disc—and damn if H&O aren't the sound of today's lite indie rock.

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The Undertones

Teenage Kicks: The Story Of The Undertones
(Sanctuary)

Not only did famed BBC DJ John Peel help break The Undertones, he also named their single "Teenage Kicks" as his favorite song and has stated that he wants it played at his funeral. Now Peel's made this infectiously entertaining and heartwarming (in a non-vomit-inducing way) documentary on the band. The Undertones came from Derry, Northern Ireland, a town described by a neighboring Belfast resident as both "oppressed and oppressive." If you think your town is messed up, considered this: The Undertones were the first Derry band to dare write their own material, since doing so was considered rising above your station (the gall!). These guys (who recently re-formed without frontman Feargal Sharkey) made the breeziest, truest poppy punk about being a real teenager, yet their music still holds up decades after the pimples have disappeared. Right in the middle of *Teenage Kicks* my wife said, "I wanna be in a rock 'n' roll band!" Wasn't that what punk was all about?

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Various Artists

What the Punk?! 2
(Music Video Distributors)

Music Video Distributors keeps putting indie and punk movies out at a furious pace. This bargain-priced DVD is a great way to check out clips from 22 of its offerings. While I'm assuming that 10 minutes of the drive-in-style feature *Jesus Christ Vampire Hunter* is enough, I was able to get clued into movies about slo-mo self-destructive casualties Shane MacGowan, Wesley Willis and Dee Dee Ramone as well as watch a batch of concert footage from the likes of Sublime, Bad Religion and Circle Jerks.

Moving Pictures

DVD Reviews By Nick Dedina