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**DAVID MACLEOD** - "Strange Biology" - Ships at Night Records [Dec 06]

Canada. Birds alighting on crisp winter days. Intricate finger picking and tenuous piano chords to highlight the beating of their wings. David Macleod's vocals summon all this with a wit and delicacy that is sweet and somehow not saccharine. "Strange Biology" evokes Coldplay's Chris Martin, CSN-style strumming, with lovely female harmonizing support from Katie Moore and Emma Baxter. On "Methodized," a quiet tune that boldly speaks of breaking free of the conventions and expectations that ossify our lives, Macleod urges us, "Oh we're so protected/Let lightning strike the water/ Electrify...Oh we're so tightly methodized/Let buttons fly, lose your alibi/Liquefy." This is thoughtful, folk-rock for adults at it's best. He slips in a few hand clapping, foot-stompers, but Macleod is strongest when he sticks to the mesmerizing folkie territory. The opener 'Long Goodbyes' asks "have you ever listened to a song/ That don't say much but it'll do you wrong?" None of these tunes will do you wrong.--- Nate Fitz 8/11 [top](#)

**MADE IN MEXICO** "Zodiac Zoo" - Skin Graft Records [March 06]

There's some interesting stuff going on here to be sure. Most of Made in Mexico hails from Providence, Rhode Island and not Tijuana, but they sound more like they came from Mars than either one of the other locations listed. Ex-Arab On Radar guitarist Jeff Schneider is included in the line-up and the same sort of audio experimentation that typified that amazing band is evident here too. Stylistically the material is all over the map, wobbling through various musical landscapes like a drunken sailor. Some of the harsher noise forays can try the patience a bit but usually throw a curveball just when it seems to be a bit too much. Fans of Sonic Youth noise farming will be pleased to hear this and Rebecca Mitchell's angry yet somehow soft vocal elements invoke Kim Gordon's style of dizzy clashing vocals from way back when as well. This is music to listen to, not to do other things to and their defiance of repetitive grooves or easily accessible arrangements is clearly intentional even while sounding loose. These are for the ones who despise the "catchy", "pop", or "easy listening" elements in contemporary music. That can become a bind when it gets too reactionary as to become self limiting and that is a bit of a danger to listeners if the material is so determined to be "avant garde" or "experimental" as to become unlistenable. I sure as shit wouldn't be able to listen to this if I had even a minor headache or it would kill me. While always interesting and sure to piss off or repel all the right close minded people, I'd have to say that once those people have been banished from the room where the speakers and I had the place to myself I'm not too sure how long I'd leave Made In Mexico on the turntable. Of course I'd be loath to admit it because I can't help but recognize that they're really doing something radically different that most of the other musical projects out there right now. If you need something in your record collection to prove that you hate pop, then by all means get this, but be sure to get the LP, which apparently has a neat pop up gatefold. That's cool as fuck. The Swede. 6 out of 11. [top](#)

**MAD SIN** "Dead Moon's Calling" - I Used To Fuck People Like You In Prison/Sailor's Grave Records[May 2006]

This is one of the best Psycho-Punk-Abilly records I've heard in quite a long time, and it's not surprising considering these boys from Berlin have been swinging their axes since 1987 for fuck's sake! Top notch musicianship and the album's littered with all sorts of fun samples and sound effects between songs. The lyrics deal with real world pressing issues like zombies, vampires, demons, hookers, and cannibals. Okay, maybe not real world pressing issues, but they're funny as hell and the music's so solid they could sing about pocket lint and I'd still listen. I thought I'd pretty much burned out on the genre but this was actually a bona fide treat to hear. Apparently they just swapped out guitar players and got one of the guys from The Necromantix onboard recently for their U.S. tour so you'd be well advised to keep an eye and an ear out for 'em. If you like breakneck paced Punkabilly, this is at the top of the ladder and should definitely be snapped up. 9 on a scale of 1-11. -- The Swede [top](#)

**MAE** "The Everglow" - Tooth & Nail [May 2005]

Mae's new album sees them mount the indie-rock slagheap and become anointed as the emo world's Coldplay. There are moments of skyscraping beauty and bliss on their new album, songs so full of melody and perfection they make you stop whatever you're doing so you can be still and hear it with your entire mind. Long gone are the moments of stagestruck indecision. Mae have found in their sophomore release the courage to let the inhibitions fall aside as they belt out piano-propelled melodies that hum with righteous mastery of melody - if you're this good, it's time to flaunt it. But like their arena rock evil twins Coldplay, Mae can often take their foot off the gas and turn in songs that are melodically tight but lacking in depth. I've seen Mae live and their debut LP failed completely to capture any of their live charm. "The Everglow" fares better, although the jury's out on how a piano driven ballad like "The Ocean" will be received. It's languid piano and knitted together vocals succeed in spite of themselves: the lyrics and arrangement border on precious but the melody wins out. Sometimes Mae strike me as too squeaky clean, like they're all Mormons or something. I can't imagine this band drinking booze, let alone copping feels off groupies or copping drugs. This is not a disc to play while doing anything other than contemplating the manifold beauty of the earth. This album could see Mae lifted completely out of the post-post-punk trenches and find them opening for big music outfits like Death Cab For Cutie and Doves (and Coldplay). There is a profound grasp of melody and if you can let yourself relax and enjoy a light album, this one is gorgeous. One annoying feature is the decision to split the 13 tracks (and 2 intro/outros) over 99 tracks, which must be a copyright tactic. By song 8 your player will read "55." I'll tell you this though, as a music supervisor, when I make comps for films, if I have to do some extra bullshit like tell someone the middle 11 tracks are really 1 song by Mae, you know it ain't gonna happen. Or maybe this was all just for the pre-release copies, who knows. **THIS JUST IN:** Mae's lawyers contacted me and confirmed that only the pre-release discs had this "feature" and all discs in stores will have normal track listings. Tracks that make you think Mae are amazing: "Painless," "Ready And Waiting To Fall," and "Anything." ---Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**THE MAE SHI / RAPIDER THAN RAPIDPOWER** - Split release - S.A.F. Records [June 2006]

Every so often a band comes along that challenges past definitions of music while still having fun and the Mae Shi is one of those rare breeds. I've had the extreme pleasure of seeing The Mae Shi play numerous times in their home turf of Los Angeles and they always deliver a high energy performance that assaults the senses while confounding the ears. They're bizarre approach to songwriting never ceases to amaze and bewilder while maintaining a firm grip on your attention. Strange electronic gurglings, and beeps abound amidst bleating polyphonic choruses or screamed chants, and then just as likely dive bomb into rocking guitar driven spurts that have you banging your head until they pull the carpet out from beneath your feet the very

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next instant. These boys are cutting a new rug out of their own home made cloth and are definitely worth checking out despite the obvious risk that you might not "get it". Their magic is fun you can enjoy them without understanding them. 9 on a scale of 1-11. **Rapider Than Horsepower** are a band from the Midwest that delivers throaty breathy blasts atop weirdly teetering rhythms and like the Mae Shi draw unusual sounds out of the ether while employing traditional rock instruments and highly unorthodox multiple voice arrangements. Unlike the Mae Shi they don't employ electronic or synth effects to their bizarre mish mash sound which they actually should consider as it might lighten up some of the chaos which I found a little overpowering at points. They're definitely good though, and are also guilty of that most terrible musical crime: Being Original! I'd love to see how they pull this stuff off live and would definitely check them out if they played locally because this recording piques the interest. 7 on a scale of 1-11. ---The Swede. [top](#)

**MAGIC BULLETS** - "A CHILD But In Life Yet A DOCTOR In Love" - Words On Music [June 07]

Oh yeah, the singer's wearing cuffed jeans, a v-neck sweater, a pomp, and is swinging the mic in pure Morrissey fashion! Phil Benson may not be a maudlin romantic like the Moz, but you know he's trying. Magic Bullets have a trebly, trembly British sound with reverbed guitars and two-step rhythm section, and a singer with a yearning, searching voice. Think of James, Red Guitars, Bluebells, Raymonde, Biff Bang Pow, any of those Brit bands from the late 80s who were plying an emotionally dense, ringing, jangling sound without much acclaim. The band's bio mentions a lot of bands I like, so we probably have similar record collections, but the bio is pretty far from the mark when it likens them to Gang Of Four, Talking Heads and Felt. I mention this because those bands would be enough for me to pick up this record (and it might work on you). My favorite track is "The Tender Throes" which has a tight, jazzy rhythm and an expressive Wurliitzer sound. All of these songs are tender and spindly, nothing low end or bass-heavy or aggressive, at all. I hear some really interesting, McCartney-esque basslines in "Spilled Milk" and other places that make me think there are greater things to come from this band, especially when Ryan Lynch completes a convincing riff nicked from Johnny Marr. You could say negatively about this band any of the things that were leveled at The Smiths, and their challenged singer, their throwback songs, their flower-fragile sensibilities - but it's exactly those reasons that make me like Magic Bullets. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

**MAGNET** - "The Simple Life" - Filter [Oct 07]

Norwegian Even Johansen is back with another collection of dreamy pop. Magnet's approach is to create an acoustic ballad and then add 100 tracks around it with strings, maracas, piano, banjo, mandolin and whatever else is lying about the studio. The sound is more like ELO than Beatles, but his voice is a genuine find that keeps it from getting too precious. With lyrics like "it's not ok to fuck my body if you're also going to fuck with my mind," Johansen is not writing lullabies. The kitchen sink production creates supremely lazy, golden light acoustic ballads that are rich in detail but sleight as butterfly wings. It all comes down to whether Johansen's voice is enough to see you through the syrupy girlfriend rock while waiting for the lush production to leap out and grab your interest. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**MAGNET** - "The Tourniquet" - Filter US Recordings [April 06]

Magnet is the project and nickname of Even Johansen, a Norwegian. His music is a foil or counterbalance to the Norge Black Metal albums you've been playing backwards as you try to contact the Dark Lord. Anyway, Magnet is smooth and orchestrated pop music with rich veins of melody that pour out of your speakers as gently as tiny little waves lapping at your toes. At times, Magnet knits his vocals in so many layers it's a giant, warm blanket of criss-crossing notes, as on "Fall At Your Feet." There are occasional moments of production treatments in the style of Dust Brothers, but those are merely to give this a more "modern" sound. The nearest equivalent would be the dreamy tones of Abandoned Pools, but with something shiny and pretty wrapped around it, like a big sonic silver bow. This certainly is melodic and at times begs a closer listen. However, I'd recommend it for people who are interested in pleasant sounding music to have on while friend come over for a bottle of Zinfandel. Magnet also seems a little girly and precious: like his target group was 20 year-old women. Especially on "Miss Her So," which he repeats ad nauseum. Yeah, some bitch broke my heart too, mate, but you don't see me writing sappy songs about it, do you? No slam on Magnet, but it is very produced, poppy, pretty - and also gutless, wimpy and too much like LiteFM. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**MAHI MAHI** "(Re) Move Your Body" [Oct 2005]

Repetitive electro fuzz from Rhode Island...I swear! Not sure if I get the DANCE band comparisons, but they're a herky jerky duo that in the right mood you'd find yourself bopping your head right out the door of the club to one of their odd ball jamz. ---Craig Goossen 3/11 [top](#)

**THE MAKERS** Rock Star God - Sub Pop

Not sure what scene this band fits into. They sound like they're all hopped up on T. Rex and the New York Dolls. They wear Chelsea boots and bellbottoms and "Uptown Saturday Night" hats on the record cover. Strings, tambourines, choirs-all round out their sound. They rely on a nostalgia for 70s arena-rock that may or may not exist outside of hipster scenes. The Dolls succeeded in what they did but how many bands (and there's been many) have bit their scene and ended up looking like dandified asses? This record finally gets going by the sixth song, "I'm A Concrete Wall" which fits in with a 60s Blues Magoos or Standells sound. Fuzzbox guitars, one-two snap drumming, rhythmically similar to "Dirty Water." The Makers were probably a 60s garage rock band that hung out too long in New York. The sound here is a fusion. Sometimes it works and other times it's indulgent. The enjoyment depends on if you can accept a band who demand to be afforded rock star status, hero worship in the grand 70s tradition. It comes off as calculated: wah-wah guitars, sirens in the background, spoken intros. I don't get it. -Paul [top](#)

**THE MALL** - "Emergency At The Everyday" - [Oct 06]

There seems to be a sort of eclectic musical movement emerging from the Bay Area, with bands like Deerhoof and Erase Erata at the head of it and now the Mall has emerged with their own unique contribution. This three piece specialize in an unorthodox sound that relies heavily on strangely sterile keyboard sounds combined with jagged guitar bursts, breathy screamed vocals, and disjointed rhythms. The Los Angeles band the Mae Shi has a similar sound, one of post hardcore deconstruction that insists on arranging songs out of seemingly disparate chunks and calling the result songs, creating a patchwork quilt of sound that's more interesting than a monochrome blanket of musical style. This is good stuff with an twist to it, and worth checking out. 8 on a scale of 1-11. ---The Swede [top](#)

**ELENI MANDELL** - "Miracle Of Five" - Zedtone Records [June 07]

Eleni Mandell's been spooling out a thread of graceful retro-pop for over a decade now, and the sultry sounds on Miracle of Five will be welcome to mature ears looking for something beyond the pop-starlets of today. The steamy opener, "Moonglow, Lamp Low," is a lullaby that urges us to turn the lights down, while you ease into a make-out session in the back of your '57 Chevy. Mandell's vibe makes me think of my old L.A. retro-buddy Curtis, who would give his wingtips to be Mandell's boyfriend. Her black and white French New Wave music videos, bobbed hair and poodle skirts would make that swinging cat daddy purr. But the beauty of Mandell is you don't have to be retro 24-7 to dig her music. There's solid craft behind the kitsch. Whether you dig Billie Holiday, Pink Martini, Cat Power or Hem, songs like "Girls," "Wings in His Eyes" and "Make-Out King" are compelling tales of the rakish men, some sweet, some philandering, that fill Mandell's world. She leads with her acoustic guitar and luscious vocals, then her boys add texture throughout the record with marimbas, violin and upright bass. While the album is serene, in a couple of her live performances on YouTube, ("Pauline") she comes across feisty like PJ Harvey, a nice side to see. Catch this sweet-heart live and let her rip your out. ---Nate Fitz 8/11 [top](#)

**MANDO DIAO** - "Ode To Ochrasy" - Mute [April 07]

Song to song I kept thinking Mando Diaos sounded exactly like another band. Sometimes they perfectly mimic The Libertines, other times, hey we're The Strokes. Sometimes even Robbers On High Street. It took me awhile to try and figure out "where" MD were as a band, what their take on rock music was all about. I've skipped (unintentionally) their first two records, so I come into this with nothing preformed. They start with a song about former LA Kings' captain Luc Robitaille, which just makes my head spin. It's a tight, fast, Brit-flavored rocker. But they're Swedes. Some of them. They blow a heart-shaped smoke ring to Libertines on "Long Before Rock N Roll" with a rushed, twin vocalist led song. A song I like a lot better, that feels more authentic, is "The Wildfire." The more I listen to this record the more I can just relax and quit trying to spot reference points, and just enjoy the music. The generally upbeat, quick tempos and harmonized vocals suggest an equal love of The Beatles as any of the heroin-addled rockers of today. "Morning Paper Dirt" is one such Beatles-esque song of great pop. This album also feels like some of the parts were re-recorded live, like the basic drum and bass tracks were done, then the guitars came back and jammed in some loose and live sounds. Sure cure for the studio blues that generally rob a song of its vitality. Everything here is very kinetic and snappy. I think I was resistant to this band because they look like they're trying really hard to look cool, half Oasis, half Dandy Warhols. As they say though, the proof is in the pudding, so if the music is good, who cares, right? Overall, this is a damn fine enjoyable album, but it did take me several listens, so give them a few chances. --- Leeds 9/11 [top](#)

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**MANIC** - "floor boards" - [April 07]

I'm actually really glad that I got to hear this Debut EP from LA's band MANIC. At first, I was very afraid of hating it just by judging the name and album art. I was expecting something completely different, maybe like a hard rock or metal band. The one tough guy word reminded me of Terror, and lets really not go anywhere near there. In reality this release was very enjoyable. The opening track "Chemicals for Criminals" does not set the tone for the rest of the album and I wonder why it was included. It did act as a good prerequisite for the following "Caf? Barcelona" which rings right in with a great intro and falsetto vocals. The last 3 songs can be compared to At The Drive-In, Radiohead, Coldplay, and As Tall As Lions. Ending quick with 5 songs this debut Ep does its job of keeping the listener wanting more. Very original. 7/11 ---Dennis. [top](#)

Man **MANIC HISPANIC** "Grupo Sexo" - BYO Records[Oct 2005]

A group of OC Vato punks whose members have been in and are currently in: The Adolescents, Cadillac Tramps, The Grabbers, Punk Rock Karaoke, The X-Members, 22 Jacks, Final Conflict, and Agent Orange. This disc contains 11 covers of classic punk tunes, some played straight up and others with a hispanic flair, all of which is killer. With renditions of Green Day, Circle Jerks, Fear, Vibrators, Descendants, Weirdos, 999, Ramones, The Crowd, Minor Threat and The Clash, there's no shortage of great grindz performed to perfection. Must be fun as hell live! ---Craig Goossen 7/11 [top](#)

**MANIC HISPANIC** The Menudo Incident - BYO Records 2003

Old School Punk Rock with plenty of tabasco and a twist of lime. Manic Hispanic have got to be one of the funniest parody punk bands on the planet, and certainly have one of the best tastes in music of any one of them, up there with the Vandals. The covers are tight and so close to the original rough-cut versions it's uncanny. It helps if you're already acquainted with their musical sources and have a sense of humour to get it, but that shouldn't be too hard since they deal in the classics. Originally released in 1996 by the now-defunct Dr. Dream label, this first effort pretty much encapsulates the fun-loving Punk Rock Vato attitude that carries them through the same waters in later efforts ("The Recline of Mexican Civilization" and "Mijo goes to Junior College"). The individual band members could all be considered punk rock royalty themselves, boasting ex or current membership in such great combos as The Adolescents, The Cadillac Tramps, The Grabbers, Punk Rock Karaoke, The X-Members, 22 Jacks, Final Conflict, and Agent Orange. Their hilarious but excellently executed homages include covers of songs by such greats as The Sex Pistols, X, The Damned, Black Flag, The Clash, The Circle Jerks, Iggy and the Stooges, The Buzzcocks, and other greats, all lovingly filtered through the Homeboy filter. You can tell that they're having fun with music they truly love and it's nice to hear. Lyrics are bent and tweaked to accommodate the wry barrio humour. "God Save the Queen" is delivered all en Espanol and the music sounds as good or better than the original version. The Damned's "New Rose" is transformed into "New Rosa" and X's "L.A." moves over a little bit to become "East L.A.". The greatest punk rock classics take a bus ride through the barrio on Cinco De Mayo. 8/11 -- The Swede [top](#)

**MAN IN GRAY** - "I Can't Sleep Unless I Hear You Breathing" - Serious Business Records [Sept 2007]

Man In Gray is an odd name for this rock band fronted by yelping, yowling femme Christina DaCosta. MIG take their sonic inspirations from PJ Harvey and Boss Hog, Morningwood and 70s rock. Not bad influences at all. There is a more modern rock sound accompanying DaCosta's manic singing, with guitars feeling the need to bring some big superfuzz distortion. A song like "Commodity 1" veers from this buzzing guitar sound to spidery delay fretwork. That's kind of the dynamic of MIG in a nutshell. They have an on/off switch that determines if a portion of a song will be half-time and suggestive, or if it will be full throttle and losing control. DaCosta will sing feathery and pretty on the former parts, and on the latter parts she's trying to strangle herself via throat manipulations. "Crawl" crawls along for a couple minutes of introductory music before propelling itself into a shouting middle 8 and then back out into some double time rock. Because I can't really hear where they are at with their style, I am having a hard time figuring them out. The album art does you no favors either, because there are no pictures, it's mostly black, and no lyric sheet. The look of a band is actually important to me, forgive the superficialities. MIG have ducked this issue, so I don't know if they're NYC hipsters like Boss Hog or out of touch 70s rockers. The songs are fairly consistent so I guess this is the sound they're after but I have a hard time getting into it because it really sounds like it's years too late, and DaCosta's style, although full of energy and conviction, is not very compelling. --- Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

**MAN OR ASTRO-MAN?** Eeviac - Touch And Go Records

Not the newest MOAM album but it is the most recent we bought. This is a funny band to develop a relationship with. I have only 3 of their albums out of the 400 or so they've put out, so I can't really chart their adventures. They haven't strayed from the formula yet: sci-fi movie dialogue, Jazzmaster guitars through Fender-twins and a fast, punk rock surf music. At times the drum frenzy and chord changes bury the fine guitar leads. MOAM exist in their own bracket. Few bands play surf music: Phantom Surfers and a defunct south bay band Bookmobile, come to mind, but none are doing it with the punk glee and abandon of MOAM. (Allegedly Theologian Records has a Bookmobile disc in the works, finally those surf classics will be heard). MOAM steer us into the future. Songs like "Interstellar Hardrive" (a title parody on the classic Pink Floyd song), and "A Reversal of Polarity" nod to the silly sci-fi past, of robots, flying saucers, and thinking computers. Someday future historians will recognize surf music as a true American music form that cannot be duplicated anywhere else, and maybe MOAM will be studied in colleges as great, underground heroes. --Paul [top](#)

**MANIFESTO JUKEBOX** Remedy - BYO Records

First off, BYO is a kickass label that's been going for 20 years now. That's long before anyone was making money off punk rock and God bless them and their perseverance. Manifesto Jukebox are using the red, black and white graphic that you can see from this page is a pretty popular new look. Strangely enough, MJ are from Finland. While they aren't the only Finpunks, the list is pretty short. They probably turned to English bands like Snuff for inspiration. Like Snuff, MJ have that deep resonant singing and guitars that sound like they're frying their amps. The lyrics either are artistically obtuse or they were more eloquent in the original language. Example: "We are asked to slash our own veins to provide nutrition to considerate parasites." Without the lyric sheet it would be years until you could discern what was being said. You can tell it's English but the howling delivery obscures the words. In a good way. MJ rock. At times I hear the vocal stylings of early Saccharine Trust and other times I hear Econochrist or Lungfish. They can pull this off and sound natural while doing it. It's melodic enough to really get into but not so clean that your teeth ache from the sweetness. This band does everything right. MJ are a 3 piece consisting of Antti, Jani, and Jukka. It indicates how rockin' they are that the 3 of them can make such a thick growling sound. This is great punk rock. Intense. Intelligent. Guitars trying to break down your door. Very stoked on this band. The malls may have killed most American punk but hooray for Finland and their devotion to the one true music. --Scott [top](#)

**MARATHON** s/t - Reignition Records [June 2005]

Maybe it's just the volume of bad music being vomited up recently by My Chemical Dipshits and their legions of brainless imitators, but this Marathon record ain't half bad. It's hard listening to any band who wants the cred of punk with the album sales of corporate rock, it's never a good mix: someone is always yelping like a muppet or practicing metal scales. Marathon, to their credit, are more or less a straightforward rock band eschewing the cliches of the FuseTV staples. Their lyricist is witty, their guitars can shred without pandering, and the drummer knows he's not in a metal band. On a few songs you could even say they've got a singer with a cool rock voice. He reminds me of Alkaline Trio (Skiba's songs) and Bad Religion. I would guess that their roots are legitimately traceable back to hunting for punk 45s and that they do not own any Motley Crue. Their contemporaries are of the Against Me school and not the eyeliner whiners and pretty boy poseurs. "Matchmaker, Matchmaker" is one of the best cuts, pitched right in the singer's vocal sweet spot and the midtempo chords move throughout the verses to buttress the song and keep it floating along. "Courting My Soul" is another darker pitched Alkaline Trio type of song. Most of this album is confident and hews close to one style. There are a couple momentary departures, and some work ("Gravity's Temptation" is a gutsy piece of solo busking) and some are overly influenced by lesser bands ("Some Lovely Parting Gifts"). "Don't Ask If This Is About You" had the potential of being a classic but I feel the chorus needs to be about an octave lower. Still, this song, like most of the album, is interesting enough in its own right with solid, meaty guitars and steady drumming without crowding the music. This is mostly a sound that knows punk is deadlier than fried chicken and has moved on. Gold star for the bird heads on people artwork, it's cut 'n' paste dirty but humorous. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**AUGIE MARCH** - "Moo, You Bloody Choir" - Jive/Zomba [Oct 07]

Are you afraid of someone named Augie? This Augie is a quintet from Australia, playing a big pop sound not entirely unlike mixing (fellow Aussies) Powderfinger and Paul Kelley. Augie March sound right down the middle of the mainstream. I'm not sure if Australia is harking back to the good ol' days of 4/4 ballad rock, but this band certainly is. They mix it up, "Honey Month" being a petal-soft whispered ballad, and "Just Passing Through" designed to get the Westie yobs to hold their bottles of beer aloft in unison. Overall musically competent but artistically not very interesting unless you missed out on basic rock pop in the



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80s 90s and 00s. --- Leeds 4/11 [top](#)

#### MASSIVE ATTACK - "Collected" - EMI [Sept 06]

Massive Attack is the hugely influential trip-hop collective from Manchester that paved the way for the entire genre yet failed to generate any heat for themselves. The MA formula uses sophisticated and sinuous rhythms that tickle the dancing foot without being obnoxious, and then over the top the enlist some guest vocalist, absolving them of the problem of not having a proper singer. In later songs, the 3 man core of MA solidified and found Robert Del Naja practically being a real singer. Some of the most memorable gems of MA's career include songs sung by Everything But The Girl's Tracey Thorne, ("Protection"), Sinead O'Connor ("What Your Soul Sings") and Cocteau Twins' Elizabeth Fraser ("Teardrop," heard on the intro to the TV show "House"). This collection here features a greatest hits CD, a rare songs CD, and a DVD with all of their videos (16), inside a hard-backed gatefold package. In short, it's a pretty stellar package, and if you've enjoyed a few MA songs but were a fickle fan, pick this up. Along with Portishead, MA were responsible for creating the chilled out, beat heavy indie music known as trip-hop. Hate to say it, but no one ever improved on those 2 bands' efforts. MA did have some missteps, though, not limited to working with the child-molesters in Soul II Soul, rapper Mos Def, and even a dreadful collaboration with Madonna. i Still, this is a nice addition to your collection. Thanks also to Roger that for turning me onto this band. ----Leeds 8/11[top](#)

#### THE MASTER PLAN 'Colossus Of Destiny' - Total Energy Records

Shut up and pay attention, motherfuckers, these 4 rock veterans have gotten tired of all the poseurs slopping out 60s retro rock and they're here to conduct a master class in rock 'n' roll booze rock. The Master Plan features one former Dictators (bassist Andy Shernoff), 2 Fleshtones (guitarist/vox Keith Streng and drummer Bill Milhizer), and a Waxing Poetics player (Paul Johnson, guitar). These guys are all about 20 years older than you but on wax you'd never know it. They strut and swagger and rock like teenagers just busted into daddy's liquor cabinet. There are some covers on here that I don't recognize and aside from that, Shernoff, Johnson, and Streng trade songwriting and singing duties. "You're Mine" is a bristling and roaring garage anthem with harmonized vocals, like The Shadows Of Knight on crack. You also get the rockabilly bass-lead "I Got Loaded" that sounds like the Didjits playing doctor with Hazel Atkins. That's not a pretty picture, so forget that, and just assume it's a cool song. "Find Something Beautiful" plays like the Ramones covering Beach Boys (which they did), the bright pop chorus riding burning guitars. The Master Plan cover a wide range of styles and sounds, from 50s faux do-wop to 60s buzzsaw protopunk, rockability to surf, to the sweet 'n' sour mixtures that take familiar formulae and breath new life into them. The guitar work is top notch stuff. The tube amps and guitar tremolos glow. These guys lay down burning leads like it's no big deal and give you the sense that they didn't even break a sweat doing it. If you like any of the bands these guys have been in, you'll dig this. While this is not my favorite genre of music, the guitar skills do impress and overall The Master Plan has a lot of juice and power. RIYL: garage rock, rockabilly, 60s revival --- Paul Leeds 7/11[top](#)

#### THE MATCHES/ NEAR MISS / REEVE OLIVER 3 way split - Takeover Records [July 2005]

Three new bands joining forces for your ten bucks. Best of the lot is The Matches. Their throwback punk/new wave sound is both catchy and gritty. Their music branch completely bypassed the screamo and isn't-metal-cool trends that have polluted so many newer bands. The Matches throw in a pair of acoustic songs to confuse you. Right when you're digging their sound, it's all different. These acoustics aren't acoustic ballads, more like someone forgot to turn the mic on that records the guitar and all you got was the room mic on the strings, plus the band sound like they're in the middle of a party or a hootenanny. Reeve Oliver have one good song (I Play The Sensitive Songwriter Card) but the other two fall into Jimmy Eat World -lite territory. It's a little too pretty for my taste. Some interesting uses of stripping back on the verse changes, just letting guitar churn in one speaker. The singer has a lower range like Minus The Bear that has a lot of character but he also likes to sing too high and harmonize, which does not work nearly half as well. Near Miss are a straight forward nu punk band. Desperate vocals teetering on the edge of screaming, chugging chords that Swiz would approve of. So far so good but in the middle of "At The Seam" two singers intertwine in a style that just ain't got no more jam left in it. I don't need harmonizing then you go HIGH while I go L\_o\_w note switching. Anyway, 3 bands, each band has at least 1 good track, consider it a bloated seven inch. ---Vermin 5/11.[top](#)

#### MATES OF STATE Our Constant Concern - Polyvinyl Record Co.

Like the other celebrated two-piece band of the moment, White Stripes, Mates of State feature the boy-girl combo of Kori and Jason. MOS use keyboards and Kori sings, which makes them sound totally unlike the 'Stripes. MOS have a wit and sensibility and earnestness about their music. Standout songs like "10 Years Later" and "I Know, And I Said Forget It" show a manic keyboard and and smart lyrics. Kori's sings clear and high, no phony riot grrl growlings or forced huskiness. Often Jason adds harmony vocals, which works to great effect. The last time I can remember a guy-girl vocal team working in a band was with X. This record really grows on you. There's a faint kitsch flavor, an in-the-know hipsteriness to the band which would make MOS the music people at downtown loft parties would dig, and people who rifle used bins for obscure LPs will definitely love. MOS have a candy-coated approach to their music. They know it's amusing to hear low-fi keyboards and drum machines, but they use these simple tools to create hooky pop songs you can feel good about listening to at your next art opening. --Will [top](#)

#### MATMOS The Civil War - Matador

Ah, Matmos. Another output from the maestro's behind the beats and riddims of Ms Bjork's latest album. Their new album appropriately titled "The Civil War" comes at you with the duo's normal palate of CPU-drenched beats but this time in addition they hit you up with some good old "Deliverance"-infused banjo grooves. Well not quite "Deliverance" but definitely Americana-inspired instruments. So now I have you confused...you are thinking...How could that be ... Matmos meets Deliverance....How could that possibly be good. Well they have done it and to my surprise it is fucking good. Don't get me wrong these guys are not going to make you hum and dance around your office at work. These boys do not have pop radio or for that matter pop anywhere in them, thank god. They do however make quite a statement with this album. They take two styles of music that are so far apart (electronic computer beats and earthy Americana) and interweave them harmoniously together. They are truly fearless in their pursuit of autonomy, which I have to say, deserves at the very least some respect. To sum it up it is quite an eclectic and eccentric disk and will challenge the mind and listening ability of any listener. Whether that is good or bad you choose. --- Sonic Brian 7/11 [top](#)

#### MAXEEN - "Hello Echo" - Warner Bros Records [Dec 06]

Maxeen are up and comers just waiting for their nationwide fans to hear them. Meaning, all they're lacking is exposure, ears, publicity, coverage whatever. They have the melodies, a unique approach, and 3 eager fresh-faced lads. What else do you want? Maxeen play power pop with lots of (nearly) new wave hooks. A few years ago people wouldn't get it, but everything about the 80s is back in fashion, and why not a sound that replicates one of the colossal acts of that time, The Police? Maxeen is still in that "we're a band" phase, unlike The Police who quickly went into "we're Sting's backup band!" So if you can imagine a band picking up where "Zenyatta Mondatta" left off, and detouring through the power pop world, you'll get it. Two of their standout tracks are "Love Goes A Long Way" and "Seconds Later." The thing that will grab you is singer Tom Bailey [also the name of Thompson Twins' singer ---Ed.] can really bend and wrap and throw his voice around. Sting took practically until his band broke up to really figure it out, Bailey's got it now. Maxeen also features a very creative and tight guitar/drum duo, making them pretty much the full package. Maxeen originally got a leg up from LA label SideOne Dummy, and this new record is not radically different except for there being a bit more depth in the recording. If their label puts muscle behind it, Maxeen can have a hit. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### MAXEEN s/t - SideOneDummy Records

Wouldn't it have been fantastic to have been there at the beginning of The Police's long career, when only a handful of fans turned up at gigs and you had the band all to yourself? Time machines don't come cheap, but Maxeen's debut LP will do the trick. Maxeen is a local LA band signed by Warped Tour mavens SideOneDummy, and I'd have to say it's their best signing yet. This trio is mining the halcyon days of independent rock and coming up with gems of brand new intensity. The comparisons to The Police only go so far, but singer Tom Bailey not only plays the bass but also has the pretty-boy good looks and model's cheekbones of Sting. Bailey's vocal style recalls the effervescent melodic pop of "Can't Stand Losing You." He's a better singer than Sting was at a similar phase (first album). I always thought the other guys in The Police got paid short shrift, so we won't repeat that mistake here. Guitarist Shannon McMurray is as nimble as they come. His creative melodies erupt into full-ahead charges and then back off into off-time rhythms, neat as you like. Drummer Jay Skowronek never overplays his kit but always manages to fill in the empty spaces with something that fattens the sound instead of fighting the guitars or vocals. All three musicians mesh together better than Sting's hair weave. While Maxeen's roots stem from the fertile soil of early Police, their branches unfold into modern power-pop. My love of The Police is narrow, and so when Maxeen break out into more aggressive songs or more melodic riffs, it gladly reminds me of the mid-period The Jam and XTC. Their sound has been sorely lacking on

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modern radio but hopefully they and their like-minded peers are spawning a return. RIYL: Communique, Elvis Costello, XTC, Sugarcult, The Jam, The Police. --- Paul Leeds 9/11 [top](#)

#### MC HONKY! I Am The Messiah - SpinArt Records

According to the official press release, MC Honky is a Silverlake dj in his mid 50s with an eclectic record collection and a will to set modern ears back on course. It's all fun and games for Eels frontman Mark Oliver Everett ("E") who decided to get some of the funky party beats out of his head and onto some wax. E enlists help from his friends Joey Waronker, Kool G Murder (an Eels alumnus), and musicians named Sir Whacks-a-lot and Playboy Gigolo Bandit. It's likely longtime Eels backbone Butch and one or two of E's friends like Jennifer Eccles and Lisa Germano, but they're not telling. On the upcoming Eels tour MC Honky is supposed to be opening up, so we'll see how they pull that one off. The sound lays spoken instructional records over organ-heavy dance music, sort of like the Beastie Boys spin-off BS 2000. The disc contains an animated video for the song "Sonnet No.3 (Like A Duck)" which has Underdog-style graphics of the feckless MC Honky cruising around in his convertible shooting out vinyl missiles at pop luminaries Madonna, Eminem, Marilyn Manson and more. Once each of these music villains gets the MC Honky vibe, they fall in and begin the natty duck dance, peace prevails. Some of the "found" vocals on this album have a disconcerting duality: while the music is playful there is still something "mental-breakdown" about a song like "The Baby That Was You" that has a woman gushing over and over about how wonderful you were as a baby. The sort of thing you might reflect on when you are at the end of your hope. Especially when you recall such Eels anthems as "Baby Genius" that describe just such a state of mind. "Baby Elephant Rock-a-bye" is an amusing and musically hopping track with a crowned title lyric and a shuffled dance bedrock. Even when E is trying to goof around he still makes intense, interesting music. This record is good fun, MC Honky's beats and prose will win over the steeliest musical villain. --- Paul Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### THE MEASURE SA - "Historical Fiction" - Team Science Records [Aug 07]

Trading vocal duties between Lauren and Mike, The Measure [SA] plays a down-and-not-completely-dirty punk rock straight from the garage and into your arms. Mike clearly hates pockets because sometimes he sings like he's got his car keys and spare change in his mouth, and possibly a lit ciggie too. On "Ballad Of A Falling Star" you are slapped around with a speedy burst of punk rock that hearkens back to the punks who never sold out and never bought in, and whose voice does this remind you of? Oh yeah, Shane MacGowan. Lauren's singing is something to make specific mention of, because so many women in alternative music just get it wrong. A woman's options in alt-music are bracketed by sounding like someone booted her in the nose (Brody Dalle) on one end, or like a girl who has just been humped tirelessly or dumped unceremoniously by wonderboy (Gwen Stefani) on the other. What Lauren does that is so rad is that she sings fast but in her own voice, not trying to sound tough or sexy or angry or whatever: she's getting it out like someone who loves music, not someone who is auditioning for "American Idol" or reconstructive nose surgery. She is cool without pleading with you to think she's cool. When you talk about catchy songs or singalong choruses, you have to be specific and say this is not the "whoa-ohhh-oh" type of bro-core kiddie music. This is just super-catchy music. This whole album is tight and fast, with only one song breaking the 3 minute mark, and 6 not breaking the 2 minute mark! The Measure [SA] plays with manic glee like you find some wannabe Irish punkers doing, yes, with that joy, but without sounding artificial or like they're humping the Pogues' legs. If you want the story behind the "[SA]" go to their website. Album artwork is kinda beat because there's no band photo and the cover is a snoozer, but nice cat on the CD itself. Great record, check it out. --- Leeds 9/11 [top](#)

#### ME FIRST & THE GIMME GIMMES "Ruin Jonny's Bar Mitzvah" - Fat Wreck Chords

The silly boys of punk rock are back with their live destruction of some poor kid's celebration of reaching manhood. Evidently this was the real deal, a Bar Mitzvah party where the moneyed elite compete with each other by throwing ever more lavish parties for their progeny. Somehow, The Gimmes were selected as an appropriate band for the occasion. While some of the celebrants seem amused, others clearly are confused and/or dismayed with the sonic assault of sloppy tunes. This time 'round, The Gimmes confront such golden oldies as Styx, REO Speedwagon, The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, Billy Joel, Linda Ronstadt and others. What separates the Gimmes from your average evening at a karaoke bar is charisma, baby, that showbiz Magic. These 5 lads are their own soul crew, disciples of their own cultish status, and they never need stoop to pander to their fans. If The Gimmes want to run through a bunch of cheesy hits from the past and abort half of them before the second chorus to be able to pound a few more shots of Wild Turkey from the open bar, they will, fans be damned. And the family and friends of Jonny seemed none to pleased with these raucous renditions. I imagine it was kind of like being in Junior High and telling some High Schoolers you were having a party, with the agreement being they'd get you some beer. Instead, they show up, steal your TV and your girlfriend, and leave you and your pals standing around with blank expressions. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### ME FIRST & THE GIMME GIMMES Take A Break - Fat Wreck Chords

The Gimmes return with their fourth adventure in punk rock silliness, this time doing battle with R & B masters of schmaltz. Some of the songs they cover are so odious in their original form that you could be forgiven for wanting to commit murder if you heard them. In the Gimmes malicious hands, however, even a cheese-fest like "Isn't She Lovely" is hilarious fun. It'll get you up of your arse and grinning like a maniac. The Gimmes also dust off tunesmiths like Seal, (child molester) R. Kelly, Prince, and more. Interestingly, they perform their cover of Prince's "Nothing Compares 2 U" the way Sinead O'Connor performed Her version. A cover of a cover: there's nothing like the real artificial. This is lifestyle punk. Mainly what the Gimmes sell is the proof that they are having a great fucking time making this music, getting together every other year to drink beer and record whatever silliness comes into their heads. Larking about in San Francisco, hanging off trolley cars, thinking of what to buy next with their millions of dollars - it looks like a great life, and they seem to be saying that you (yes You) might even be able to hang out with them. They are that kind of guys. The Gimmes: Joey and Dave from Lagwagon, Spike from the Utters, Chris from Foo Fighters, and Mike from NOFX, are all punk rock superstars who more than shred on their instruments. The songs they chose for this gift to the world are embarrassingly tuneless and the saccharine sentiments expressed in the lyrics are great objects for the Gimmes' ridicule. "Take A Break" is a dry vodka martini of an album: the individual Gimme talents compliment each other and the results are intoxicating. ---Paul Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### MELLOWDRONE "Box" - Red Ink/Columbia [March 06]

Mellowdrone has a very seductive sound and image: of dark night clubs and sexual trysts, designer drugs and blue-eyed soul. It's territory covered by Roxy Music as well as Pulp, and in fact that's not a bad way to describe them, as a union of those two sexy, glamorous bands. Singer Jonathan Bates has a smoky, worn, croon that certainly does recall the Bryan Ferry of "In Every Dream Home A Heartache," and the programming of Tony DeMato gives a modern twist to this jaded ladies man personae. When they are at their best, like in the lush "Fashionably Uninvited" and "Bone Marrow," Mellowdrone are sensational. There are more than a couple songs on "Box" that devolve rather quickly to programmed beats and some dark-voiced ruminations, and neither pick up nor expand on the gauntlet thrown down by those songs. So half the record becomes something similar to Ringside, and half maintains a swaggering sense of lovelorn coolness, and it's this latter portion that is remarkable rather than simply marking time. --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

#### MELOTRON Sternenstaub - Metropolis Records

German synth trio Melotron have been pounding the decks since '95, building a sizable fanbase in their native land and slowly attracting dancefloor cybernauts here in the USA. Their beat friendly sound, best likened to Depeche Mode on holiday in the Freitheit Strasse, has garnered them a number of Top 10 hits. Think of a trendy Berlin nightclub, blinding light rigs, dancers wearing mirrored sunglasses and shiny black clothing like Trinity from The Matrix, and you're on the path to "Sternenstaub" (Deaf Stars? Star Deaf?). All lyrics are in German, so if you don't speak it, you can ascribe whatever themes are bouncing around your skull to these songs. Of course, those of us who are German speakers will know that the songs are called things like "No Problem," "Follow Me In The Light," and "Desire Me Not Zuruck," and deal with the familiar topics of lost love and alienation. Unlike a lot of their colleagues, Melotron have straight human vocals over their science beats, none of that processed growling and yelling. In fact, if you altered the melancholy of Depeche Mode's "Enjoy The Silence" (come on, you know you secretly like some of their songs) with a virus full of The Faint's walloping dance grooves, add in some of the girlfriend-clutching moments of Boytronic, and you'd have Melotron. Not true cyberneticians, Melotron play popmusik laced with romantic moments. This isn't the cold hammerings of Front 242, it's for stylish hackers in love. In Germany, where most social life involves clubbing and loud rhythmic music, Melotron is determined to get you out under the flashing lights and moving your feet. You can almost see the lightshow when Melotron stop the beats and let the synth strings seesaw through the air ("Erwartungen") and then the song picks up again with rolling drums. "Stenenstaub" provides a dancefloor collaboration between the heady excesses of Ibiza party music and the futuristic underworld of Berlin. Darker not brighter, next time. --- Paul Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

#### MESS UP THE MESS - "You Remind Me Of Summer Vacation" - Paroxysm [Apr 07]

Mess Up The Mess should be a lot better than they are. After all, they're self-proclaimed feminist riot grrrrrls hailing from

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[Nural 6](#)  
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Washington, D.C., our nation's lovely capital. And that was also the temporary stomping grounds of fellow feminist riot grrrl band Bratmobile, which was actually pretty good. Sadly, M.U.T.M. isn't anywhere near as good and is sort of like the person you hire for their kick ass resume and then discover they're annoying to be stuck around at work. It's sad, because even on the recordings, you can tell that they're having fun playing, but it's not very fun for other people to listen to. The token male guitar player is quite good, as is the frantic keyboard player, but the drummer can just barely hold a beat, the singer's voice gets incredibly annoying after one or two songs, which is hard to ignore when it's way out front. Perhaps there's an element to their live performances that aren't coming through on the recordings, but a better band to check out would be The Epoxies, who tackle the same new wave pop punk concept and actually kick serious ass at it. 4 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede [top](#)

#### METRIC "Live It Out" - [Jan 2006]

Canada is on fire and this four member band's brew is possibly the tastiest and one of the finer coming from that fertile land. The first cut is deep. Empty is a complex jam balancing all the killer elements of a fine song, A+ vocals from lead singer Emily Haines, thick guitar and heavy drum and bass. Their website states the song drums up a sound similar to Sonic Youths GOO era offerings. Only for a split second in the opening guitar lick, though. Once this woman starts singing the band sounds like themselves and only themselves. Great track and I'm absorbing it repeatedly as we speak (or rather as I write this faded stab at a review)...Glass Ceiling follows and twists up another fine turn...Screw it, buy the music it's real good...If you buy online, track by track style, check out the two above mentioned tracks along with Poster of a Girl and Monster Hospital...They're succulent soundz!---Craig Goossen 7/11 [top](#)

#### MEW - "And The Glass Handed Kites" - Columbia [Aug 06]

If you listen to some grindcore right before throwing this disc on, it will sound a lot better than it did the first time you heard it. At least, that's what I'm experiencing right now. Mew first struck me as an over-produced major label wankfest trying to hone in on the Travis/Coldplay/Muse fans. I was even reminded of Alan Parsons Project and Dr. Hook. Now I'm not so sure. Now for the simple knife in the ribs: the band photos. Album cover is a retarded revamp on The Stooges' first record, and the booklet contains individual shots, with 2 members appearing startled, shirtless and sweaty, 1 member looking like donkey-faced git Johnny Borrell of Razorlight, and the final Mew looking like a 70s Jesus. Bad, bad cover art. They're Danes, I guess that's their excuse. These songs, however, owe a lot to opulent production techniques and effects pedals. The singer's voice is softened and processed to a feathery fine finish, each note silkier than Kate Beckinsale's panties. His high pitched voice goes somewhere north of Granddaddy and south of Sigur Ros. But like other insufferably talented Scandinavian bands like Surrounded and Sigur Ros, Mew really knows how to create gilded atmospherics. A song with the cringe worthy title "The Seething Rain Weeps For You" has innumerable vocal tracks harmonizing and swirling around like opium smoke. The music is symphonic and embroidered with synths and other electronic noises that ELO pioneered. You can discern nary a word without careful attention to the lyrics booklet and so sometimes the singer's voice starts doing a Cocteau Twins number in your head. Advice: listen to this record a few times before even asking yourself if you like it. Don't overthink it. Put the headphones on and disappear. ---Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### MIA Lost Boys - Alternative Tentacles

This band was active in the days when the cops were raiding every gig in town and routinely busting heads open. Originally from Las Vegas, MIA made a lot of friends in the So Cal punk scene circa 1981-1983. This combines their "Murder In A Foreign Place" ep and the "Notes From The Underground" lp with almost every other song they released. MIA had a dark sound, one that made them kin to TSOL, Social Distortion, and Agent Orange although MIA never reached those heights, due to singer Mike Conley going off to jail. But you can hear the seeds of greatness here, songs that still hold up. Also included on this cd is the song "Tell Me Why" which originally came out on American Youth Report in 1982. The MIA catalog had been unavailable for a long time before this cd came out. I had to buy a vinyl copy of "Murder In A Foreign Place" for \$40. It was worth it, so this cd is definitely worth it. --Paul [top](#)

#### THE MICHELLE GUN ELEPHANT Rodeo Beat Tandem Spectre Alive Records

Japanese garage punk. Chugga-chugga, riff heavy, and rocking. Not as abrasive as the other famous Japanese garage punk bands, Guitar Wolf or Teengenerate. They call their sound "Japanese Monster R&B." This new gem is something like their sixth LP. To give you some idea where they're coming from musically, they named one of their records "High Time," the same name as the first MC5 record. They also have a record called "Chicken Zombies," which tells you all you need to know. TMGE kick some fucking ass. The lyrics are all (or mostly) in Japanese, so you'll never get tired of hearing the songs. This guitar player, Futoshi Abe, is a pretty gnarly and nimble-fingered ripper. While the drums are crashing down like the tools in the garage falling off the walls, the guitar is busy spinning your head around. It's just ugly enough, and rough enough, to really rock. The song "Abakareta Sekai" is the old E, G, D, G chord progression you remember from The Stooges, but TMGE do it some justice. Some songs on here echo The Stooges, some Nirvana, some even TSOL. This whole album is white hot fuge rock. They are the Japanese Hellcopters; the Rising Sun's Radio Birdman; the East's New Bomb Turks. "Baby Stardust" is a pretty catchy tune, maybe because Yusuke Chiba howls those two words in English on the chorus. I also hear some of Nirvana's "Bleach" on here. If these Japanese garage killers had mastered English like any of the Swedish crop of "garage" rockers, they would have been huge. For now, you can get into their sound while they're still small. The future will see them finally putting out an album in English, and when they do, they'll be the talk of the town. --Matt Vermin [top](#)

#### MIDNIGHT MOVIES - "Lion The Girl" - New Line Records [May 07]

The Midnight Movies have been plugging away since 2003, with steadily growing notoriety that's well deserved. While they've always had a sort of ethereal yet slightly dark sound, largely due to the signature sound of singer Gina Olivier's softly sweet yet insistent voice, recent line up changes and additions have helped widen the scope of their sound considerably. The biggest improvement's come from dragging Olivier off the drums and putting her out front with a microphone. While they were good before, they're even better now that she's been freed from performing double duty (anyone who's ever tried to sing and play drums at the same time will have no trouble understanding what I mean). Their sound is as beguilingly poppy and dreamy as ever, but clearly the band's still evolving forward, glancing up from their shoe gazing a little more, and extending their reach on this release. While it's still a little soft for my personal tastes, I can't help but recognize the constant progress they've made since I first saw them years ago at a small club before the arena tours and hype machine got hold of 'em. A recent tour with Blonde Redhead surely won them some more fans, which is understandable since the bands have a bit in common as far as sound, structure, and appeal. An upcoming tour with the Raveonettes is also likely to increase their following too for the same reason. Current fans and anyone who enjoys female fronted dreamy dirges with a hint of edge will be pleased as punch with "Lion The Girl". 8 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede [top](#)

#### MIDNIGHT MOVIES - "Patient Eye/Golden Hair" EP - New Line Records [Oct 06]

A new EP from the quasi-goth LA band Midnight Movies shows them bending their sound to a moody, shoegazing soup, from their forthcoming 2nd LP. The A-side sounds like classic March Violets. The B-side is a cover of a song with lyrics by James Joyce and music by Syd Barrett, so it naturally sounds a little psychedellic/ren-faire. Still, this is a band to check out more closely, especially now that they've added a full-time drummer and allowed the foxy, foxy, foxy singer to stand up at the mic and be a real performer. Sitting behind her drummer, you just never got the full vibe. All we can say is "nice move!" I think there's more to MM than just swooning guitars and a supermodel singer. The music is getting more interesting and getting moodier. They have 2 videos on their website (midnightmovies.net) and I think you can hear a change from sounding kinda like an Opal/Popul Vuh amalgam, and now coming forth with their own, more polished, sound. We await the full-length. 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### MIDSTATES "Boxing Twilight" - Mental Monkey Records [Feb 2006]

Fans of the orchestrated electronic psychedellic pop of bands like Granddaddy, Flaming Lips and Mercury Rev will have a new friend in Midstates. This Chicago band has labored on "Boxing Twilight" for nearly three years and the result of all this hard work is a collection that rivals any of the above named bands in terms of pop sophistication and cleverly constructed electronic anthems. Midstates music radiates positive vibrations that might even give off heat and light. There are several reasons for making an album: sex, money, anger, grief, and sometimes just the simple love of making bright music. The mood of this disc is exuberant and celebratory, even if songs are ostensibly about death and loss and heartbreak. Midstates on this album is a lot like the rebirth of Flaming Lips on "Yoshimi" in that the grasping anxiety was replaced by a placid inner calm that resulted in a new maturity. Midstates can be contrasted with Radiohead, who also make monumental music, by saying that Radiohead is always first and foremost the product of Thom Yorke's tortured psyche. Midstates has abandoned ego in this collection of imaginative songs. Although nominally lead by Paul Heintz, Midstates' is a band whose players are skilled enough to contribute to the overall grandeur without hogging the spotlight. This works in tandem with Heintz's petal-soft voice and his down to earth ruminations on relationships. There is a very capable dynamic between the intricate drumming by Angel Ledezma and the singing synths performed by Steve Munoz and Sasha. When they are firing on all cylinders (Passed For Promotion) it's a great



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sound. Sometimes Midstates gets deliriously melodic, as on "Under There" and "Either Way." This is really a first rate record by a band deserving of much wider critical acclaim, not to mention worldwide tours. --- 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### **MILKY WAYS**-Self titled - Alive Records [Apr 07]

While Alive Records has put out some good solid in the past, I had a little trouble getting behind this one. It's not terrible but it's not really good either. As far as the music goes, it's pretty decent straightforward 60's inspired rock, but I guess the turnoff's mostly in the vocals, which are kind of shoddy and go up and down in volume throughout the record and even within songs. It's hard to tell if they did it on purpose to try to duplicate a live sound, but for whatever reason it hurts rather than helps and turns what might have been a solid punch into a cheek grazer. Bands like The Groovie Ghoulies have pulled off the same approach with more guts and just as limited singing ability, so I'm not exactly sure what went wrong here, but something ain't gelling right and it just comes across as fairly standard noisy rock that doesn't really stand out from the army of other bands plowing the same field. 5 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede [top](#)

#### **MIND IN A BOX** "Dreamweb" - Metropolis Records [August 2005]

"Some dreams of our present will be the reality of our future," proclaims the CD booklet on the new MIAB disc. This album plays like short stories set in the future. Stefan Poiss and Markus Hadwiger use their technic musik to glimpse an onrushing digital future, and where many electronic musicians revile or worship machines, MIAB predict the machines of the future will be us. Most of these songs are internal dialogues of a troubled and conflicted in an existential morass. "Lament For Lost Dreams" is self-explanatory, and "Machine Run" concludes by revealing that after the will to forget has been achieved, the narrator has become nothing more than a machine. Standout tracks are "Loyalty" and "Between Worlds," both of which pulsate with multifaceted drums and the world-worn vocals. MIAB also wisely purvey one type of techno sound, avoiding the tendency in this genre to put ten different styles on one unlistenable disc. MIAB are like a downtempo Depeche Mode. ---Vermin 5/11 [top](#)

#### **THEE MISSOURI** "In Voodoorama" - Blue Disguise Records [April 2005]

Slinky late night moody sexiness from a German band with their hand in several cookie jars. The latest disc from Thee Missouri will be well placed playing over a David Lynch film with it's dark moods and overt sexuality. Sooner Or Later They'll Get Any Of Us sets the tone and it's a inviting one. The deep drawled vocals wind and seduce around the bursts or organ, drum machine, guitar and bass. If They Ever Steal Your Amazing Grace takes off where the last song takes off, trailing down a even darker road that you can't resist going deeper into it's vortex. Let's Get Married soaks itself in the ever popular 80's electro stylings, but with enough groove and soul that they pull it off without sounding like the zillion other bands shakin' on the similar tip.---Craig Goossen 7/11 [top](#)

#### **THE MISTREATERS** Playa Hated To the Fullest - Estrus Records

In a nutshell, I like this record. It's pissed off and sweaty with roaring vocals. The guitars are dirty and blues-rock based with punk attitude. This is the kind of music best played loud. There is an element of spastic earnestness to it. Most of the songs on the album have a hurried and harried element that will appeal to those that listen to music to get up, not mellow out. Emo types need not apply. It's blown out rock and roll since you asked. You can almost see the singer knocking around if you close your eyes. There are lots of time-honored tricks like stalls and handclaps that have wisely been left unpolished. God bless its scabby pointed head. The guitar sound is mostly fuzzy and raw and cool distorted bass tones keep the ship on crash course with your auditory nerves. If you need something to whine about, my suggestion would be the lack of dynamics. The entire record is played to the hilt, very over the top, with the exception of "She's my Witch", a very bluesy and moody track with affected vocals and even (gasp) a dreamy saxophone. Nice inclusion which shows some diversity and probably gives the poor drummer time to catch his breath, which is good because the guy really pounds the kit without resorting to annoying double kick pedal bullshit. Recorded in Detroit without adding extraneous guitar layers that falsify what might be delivered onstage, pretty true to their actual sound I imagine (ain't seen em' live but I'm going if they come to town). Brought to you by the good people at Estrus that keep pumpin' out the beautifully ugly thrash rock needed to keep the pussified population down and the testosterone freely flowing. The last track ends with a huge barrage of five-car pile-up chaos that makes no apologies for the racket. Good for The Mistreaters. Some other bands may be doing the same type of thing but they're not doing it quite as well. --- The Swede. 8/11 [top](#)

#### **MIZAR** "King Of The Stars" - Mia Mind Music

Equipped with a keyboard, a microphone (sort of) and a voice to slit wrists to, Mizar succeeds in more than one would think. The music sounds like an old Atari game mixed with break-in-the-action chill down music in bad 80's sci-fi/fantasy movies. Sounds great right? Then take an insecure, operatic, singing in the shower voice and put it together. Its so bizarre that its interesting. Don't you love being the person saying, "hey, you've got to check this guy out!" So, you gather your friends around, put it on, and people laugh, uncomfortably of course, and then they say, "put on the next track" to see if it all sounds like this. Well, it kind of does. All 9 tracks have a gimmicky feel to them, and although the gimmick works, at some point there has to be some musical magnetism that makes people want to listen to it by themselves, over and over again. It does have songs that are truly good but the problem is that you have to endure over half of the album to get to them. And the chances of that are very slim. The opening track, "Like a Nun," and "The King of the Stars," are so theatrical and intimidating. I apologize for the Friends reference but "Now You Know, I Wanna" sounds like an awesome Ross Gellar keyboard masterpiece with the laser and snap sound effects. But by braving the entire album, you'll find some gems like "Infernal Game," where the cinematic qualities are actually attractive. Mizar's voice slows down, the music is more natural, and the whole is better for it. "My Angel in the Ice World," also sounds like a "real" song. It is not as frenetic as the others and is pleasant to the ears (a plus for music!). But, this is an album, and albums are like books. Sure, certain chapters could be great, but if the beginning doesn't facilitate the ending, then you've got a bad book. So, play the first couple of songs for your friends and be the hero, but when you're by yourself in your car, roll up the windows and find Mizar's golden nuggets. ---Evan Rude 6/11 [top](#)

#### **MOCK ORANGE** First EP - Dead Droid Records

Mock Orange rode in on the last train from Emo-land. They put out some decent records, nothing amazing, in the well-worn style of any number of slightly guitar powered emo. After two LPs they shifted gears. This is no gentle shifting; this is the type of gear noise you get when you're speeding down the freeway at 100 mph and throw your car in reverse. This new EP is going after the suddenly popular sound of bands like Flaming Lips, Mercury Rev, and Sparklehorse. High, whiny vocals, loopy art rock jams in the middle of songs, the usual bit. Why Mock Orange didn't just change their name is a mystery. Are you guys done with the emo sound for good, or are you coming back to it when the next JEW record hits? Fans of the old music will not dig this shit, and potential new fans are going to be chased off because of the old emo flag they used to wave so high. Their first LP, "Nines And Sixes" is not a bad record. I never listened to it enough to learn it, but it didn't offend. They seemed just shy of finding their real groove. They just made another record with Mark Trombino, whose name should be familiar to millions as the one who made the Jimmy Eat World sound, as well as producing bands like The Jealous Sound and Finch. The new record was done by the singer of Jawbox, J. Robbins. This disc is pretty good. It's more interesting than any other Mock Orange stuff I've heard. Maybe they have finally found their sound. Songs 3 (Double Down) and 5 (Driving Day) are especially lush tunes. I just wish it were by a different band so I wouldn't have the suspicion that these guys are biting whatever trend is popular at the moment. Bands changing their style and rolling with the times is a good thing. I'm not trying to advocate staying in a rut. This new sound is more mature and a better listen than the old emo sound. Advice: you should've released this under a different name and you could have a hit. --Matt Vermin [top](#)

#### **THE MODERN MACHINES** - "Take it, Somebody" - Dirtnap Records [Aug 06]

The Modern Machines play good solid punk rock with an appealing looseness that's hard not to like, and "Take It, Somebody" is a strong sampling of their fun loving brand of poppy peppy tunes. Deceptively simple yet catchy riffs abound on this release and the songs stand up on repeated listens. They employ fairly standard rock tempos on most of the tracks, but also kick it up a notch on a few to remind you they ain't just fucking around when it comes to punking out. There's a bit of unpolished looseness on several of the tracks, especially in the vocal department, but it didn't put me off too much and kind of maintained an element of homespun roughness to it that's worked in the past for other pop punk bands like The Simpletones. The songwriting's strong and while they use a lot of traditional three and four chord patterns, they include enough cool changes and stalls to give each song its own separate personality. There's a slower song at the end of the CD that's good and shows some depth and range, but I took more of a shine to the more high energy stuff they do, because they do it so well, and have a surprisingly full sound for a three piece. I really liked this record and have a hunch that a live Modern Machines show would be a good night out. They don't seem to take themselves too seriously but crank out good quality material that's seriously fun to listen to. Apparently a U.S. tour and a jaunt to Japan are in the works, so keep an eye and both ears peeled for them. 8 on a scale of 1-11. ---The Swede [top](#)

**MODEST MOUSE 'Good News For People Who Love Bad News' - Epic**

Modest Mouse gets lit up on Death on their latest scratchy disc. Apparently, Isaac and the boys lost a friend before penning this one, and they clearly worked through their pain in the studio's padded room. Like the Flaming Lips, MM has a penchant for employing their creaky vocals and gunfire guitars to explore metaphysics, science, God and their own sanity. "World at Large," which opens the record, is a melancholy lullaby to the death of a people and their planet. They kick into gear with the plucky, radio-friendly, "Float On," which tricks you into thinking they've come to a certain peace with death. But nooooo...they crank out five more death-ditties over the course of the album, ranting about digging your grave, burying yourself, black funeral caddillacs and more. The surprising thing is that with all the death-fixation and subsequent angst, this is an upbeat record! Pound your heart with your axe, release the pain in the tunes, and throw in a ballad for good measure. "Interlude (Milo)" mixes what is surely one of the bandmember's babies gurgling with a touch of maudlin pump organ to provide a ray of hope among all the death. The organ bridges into "Blame It On the Tetons," a guitar, violin and piano-tinged tune that is surely one of the group's best compositions yet. "Everyone's a building burning with no one to put the fire out," they gently harmonize. "Everyone's an ocean drowning," they lilt, and a band who's usually so virulent is sailing you off to Nick Drake territory. The closer, "The Good Times Are Killing Me," sounds like a lost Beach Boys song whose lyrics have been hi-jacked by 21st century wit. MM is a ripening indie jewel, and with airplay on car commercials, KROQ and MTV, they are poised for the main stream, for better or worse. Good times are surely on the way for MM. Let's hope they stick to their guns. --- Nate Fitz 9/11 [top](#)

**MODEST MOUSE Everywhere and his nasty Parlour Tricks Epic**

The best thing I read about MM was when the singer said he was making music to, hopefully, make Doug Martsch proud. Fans of Built To Spill will recognize a kindred soul here. I think the previous album "The Lonesome Crowded West" had a more commercial appeal. This is more of an art album. It's good to hear a band tighten up instead of losing control with each new album. "Willful Suspension Of Disbelief" leads the album off on a meditative pace. The guitar sets up the song slowly, asking you to sit back and open up, wait for it. It's spacey and ethereal. I think MM decided to just work on making decent music and to quit lusting after a radio hit or huge audiences. You take the pressure off a band and sometimes you get a result. Epic is probably pissed but the fans give it a right-on. --Matt Vermin [top](#)

**MODULAR SET "Beached On The Half Landing" - Howells Transmitter [Jan 2006]**

Great album artwork, great bonus materials, way out there interstellar space jazz. This is San Francisco's Modular Set, and they've just lifted off for deep space. Nearest comparison to mind is the early ("Zeit," "Tau Ceti") explorations of Tangerine Dream although Modular Set shows a proficiency with more difficult playing and syncopation. MS sometimes comes in with fuzzed guitars and tinkling keys, and other times it's mostly loops and guitar effects that create the drama. At the halfway point on the album, MS gaze straight at their shoes and play an introspective piano led piece with what sounds like some random activity recorded through the walls. There is a certain amount of cohesion and dissonance, as if they were trying at the same time to create thematically linked songs and to artistically take a stance away from the concept of an "album." Their artist credo is manifest with the inclusion of a watercolor paint set with the CD. This indicates that MS want active participation, not zonked out stoners with headphones to enjoy their music. These are individual experiential pieces, suitable for soundtracking or art gallery openings. --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**MOGWAI My Father My King - Matador**

20 minutes of guitars feeding back in a drone of psychedelia. This is what you hope to hear when you go to a concert: a band you like doing something in their style but busting out of the confines they've been in. Mogwai have always been quiet and spacey, and here they blow out amplifiers without losing their guitar noodlings. My Bloody Valentine meets Flying Saucer Attack. This is what I had hoped Mogwai sounded like from the stuff I'd read about them and never understood their following. Now it is clear. -Anton [top](#)

**MONEEN Are We Really Happy With Who We Are Right Now? - Vagrant Records**

First, a warning: don't send us incomplete releases, no longer will we be reviewing records without covers or artwork. On to the review: Vagrant has become the bastion of radio-friendly emo, so one can assume Moneen will fall nicely into this category. Another clue might be the ten word title of the album, preciousness bordering on satire. Moneen are big fans of wordy titles. One could say florid titles. Like, "Thoughts Weigh Heavy...Don't Get Drowned In The Weight Of It All." Not joking. So right off the bat we've got two strikes against the band (no artwork, ridiculous titles). It's a damn good thing that Moneen at least know how to crank out some good guitar energy. Midway through the second song, "Start Angry... End Mad," I had a flash of d?j^ vu: this singer sounds like Tom Linton (Jimmy Eat World). A complaint of mine for years now has been that Tom sings fewer and fewer songs with each new JEW record, and all we've got now are Jim's histrionics. So now here is what I've been waiting for, sort of. If you have the first JEW record (s/t, before "Static Prevails"), the one where Tom sings all of the songs, this Moneen wax sounds like the next logical step. Yeah, it's emo, no mistaking that, but despite their dopey song titles they don't get weepy and clingy in the songs themselves. The main singer has a lot of character in his voice. He can shout out some eyes-shut lyrics and then blend in with the other guy on the choruses while multiple guitars go darting all over the place like kites in a windstorm. Best example of this is "To Say Something That Means Nothing To Anyone At All" which crashes along for five glorious minutes and then fades out with a string section leading the way. A good move that pays off. Because of their similarity to the vanished muscle of Jimmy Eat World in their heyday, I like Moneen. At times they have good musical interplay like The Applesseed Cast and know how to stretch a song out and make it interesting. "I Have Never..." takes the emo sound and knocks the bottom out of it, settling into an intimate refrain of picked guitar notes and suddenly you can hear the potential in this band. They have sparks of originality that are begging to get let out of the emo box. One question is whether this is a mastered version of the album because the drums sound thin and compressed, like one mic was used for the whole lot. There is also some issues with the guitars falling too much in the midrange, the distortion making things sound close in, like a small studio instead of a big stage. The mix is all mushy and midrange. Vagrant is big enough to know how to do these things properly, they only short changed the band... and you. --- Paul Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**MONOFADER "Frost" - Metropolis Records**

Here's the collaboration between Sebastian Komor (Icon Of Coil) and Richard Bjorklund (Spektralized) in the EBM night on the town known as Monofader. Combining Bjorklund's baritone and Komor's synth tapestry should result in superpop electro, but only occasionally reaches the heights fans of either band would expect. Laying aside some of their darker aspirations, Monofader go straight for singalong electropop. The overdrive pulse beats of "Mimic" and the soft as eyelashes harmonic synthesizers add up for a niteclub win. It's not being original to say it sounds like Depeche Mode and Erasure, but if you like soaring keyboard chords hovering like clouds while your feet are compelled to dance, get Monofader. The record features a nifty Kraftwerk type synthbeat on "Stand Alone," and the sangfroid vocals make this the standout track. Monofader gives plenty of exuberant klub mixes and moments that would be good for fading in and out of other EBM songs. On "Why," the space radio synth combines with an almost Roland Orzabal vocal delivery for a velvety slow song. I appreciate a variety of tempos and styles on an electronic record, like on this one, but the best songs are in the minority. On "Failure," you get a convincing impersonation of David Gahan with spare instrumentation. Monofader excels when they thin out the sound and let the sonorous rumblings of Bjorklund take over, like on "Failure." On their faster songs they seem to be reusing the same drum bed with only different vocals. There are at least three excellent tracks here, with a lot of strobelight EBM to keep you moving until those tracks appear. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**MONSTER MOVIE / DREAMEND split CD - Graveface Records**

This is a split between the English shoegazer band Monster Movie and the loop experimental American band Dreamend. Monster Movie features Slowdive alumnus Christian Savill. And like that famed band, Monster Movie creates a soundscape with layered effects and treated vocals. They are not a guitar driven outfit, they employ synth and electronic percussion. The result is more Eyeless In Gaza or Durutti Column than My Bloody Valentine. It's good, it's artistically credible, and it's too short. It's tough to get a feel for a band with only two songs, one of them being instrumental. I'd say from this that they are worth a listen. The music is minimal and understated. Just not enough information to evaluate them. The other part of the split is taken up with Dreamend. A three-part song, "Ellipsis", begins with a distorted screaming guitar building up feedback, much like the music you know and love from My Bloody Valentine, but then the feedback cuts off abruptly and jangled guitar appreggios stand out like stars against the black wall of sound. The middle movement of this song picks up the pace a bit. The guitars again clothe themselves in space feedback. It is the type of song you hear on an obscure comp, or late at night on college radio, and the music appeals to you because you know it is meant only for the solitude of one's dorm room and not for the masses, the parties, the ignorant. The third movement expands on this isolation. The guitar and handbells? layout a gossamer-thin web of sound. Comparisons to Black Tape For A Blue Girl and Ecstasy Of St. Theresa come to mind. Maybe a little instrumental Ride or



distorted Felt also could be heard in their music. The packaging of this disc makes it a collector's item, and the music is worthwhile also, so you can't lose. I'd like to hear more from both of these bands. For the moment, Dreamend have a much more developed sound a more interesting approach. --Paul Leeds [top](#)

#### **THE MOONEY SUZUKI** Electric Sweat

New York City is kicking ass musically once again! It's about time they started pulling their weight. It's been a long time since Jonathan Fire\*Eater. Well here comes The Mooney Suzuki-four garage-punk art school wizards ready to put the fuckin' power back into power chords. The music is that raw sound thriving in garages across the nation given a New York sheen of ultra-cool. The chord changes might sound familiar to fans of 60s style garage rock outfits like Oblivians, The Music Machine, The Standells and even Kinks. But that's okay, they aren't trying to reinvent the wheel, they're just here to get you to move your feet and pump your arms in the air and have a kickass good rocking time. As a live band, TMS are among the best out there. Their shows are completely exhilarating affairs where you want to jump around like a pogging 1977 fool at CBGB's. Some of the magic of course is lost on wax but the record still is a great party jumping monster. These guys are on tour with The Hives, which should succeed in getting the USA to recognize some of their own homegrown stars. This is classic garage punk from the 60s blasting through today's NY art scene. --Torch. [top](#)

#### **MORRISSEY** "Ringleader Of The Tormentors" - Attack Records [May 2006]

The Mozzer bailed out on LA for Rome, and so begins a new chapter in the illustrious career of the foremost foppish wit in all of musicdom. It dawned on me the other day, (after Coachella came and went without a reunion by The Smiths) that as huge as the Smiths were to me, Morrissey's best songs, best melodies, and best vocal performances have been as a solo artist. Throughout his 10 solo records, we've been treated with astonishing feats of lyric and melody, and also maudlin sagas of gay mopery. What can you do? You love him or hate him. As the ringleader, his newest album is back in classic Moz territory, a more nuanced version of the "Viva Hate" era. Moz's band is decidedly more in the background on this effort, with nothing that even dares raise its head to Marr virtuosity. The guitars are accompaniment only and the sonic closeness is more like a Bryan Ferry album than a shining slab of post Britpop indie rock. "On The Streets I Ran" sounds like a forgotten nugget from his earliest solo days. If nothing else, this new album proves Moz still has all of his vocal range (and perhaps expanding it), and his ability to try on personas and commit his singular brand of self-deprecation and lacerating wit to wax is still as sharp as ever. Why an "8" then? The songs, though melodic, are sedate, even by Mozzer standards. Rome must be agreeing too much with him. Another batch of great songs but they are not as wildly tuneful as his best work. You DO get some of his most frank gay admissions (explosive kegs between my legs... nothing entered me, until you came... etc), but nothing as ascerbic as recent works like "All The Lazy Dykes" and "I Have Forgiven Jesus." This work stands as a more sophisticated, almost dinner-party type of album, even classy. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **MORRISSEY** "You Are The Quarry" - Attack Records

The Moz is with us again. His infatuation with Latino greasers seems to have come to an end and the dreary moanings of "Southpaw Grammar" have been left at the curb. Now that Moz has made the media circuit we all realize he's been merely biding his time, holed up in the Hollywood Hills, waiting to hurl angry bolts of invective at the musically inept and shallow. Has Moz changed, has he lost his ascerbic wit, his keen sense of irony? "America Is Not The World" serves notice that Moz is sick of our inability to get our shit together. That goes for our sorry government and our enslavement to the hamburger culture. Moz tells you where he'd like you to stick your burger. Still vegetarian, still gay, and still very arch - it's a lot like the Moz we knew, yet the years have added a sturdiness to his frame, a calm to his eyes that makes him look more like an English George Clooney. The pipes are still pitched to fey perfection. On "I Have Forgiven Jesus" Moz brings down the house with his sopranic confession. His voice hasn't changed a whit. Maybe it's time to dig out your old Morrissey albums and jog your memory with all the delicious tunes he's crooned. This record finds the Moz in a bit of a melancholic mood and I could have done with a couple more uptempo numbers, but the tunes are solid and Moz sounds great. There are a couple of nuggets here that would slide right into "Viva Hate" and a few that offer moments of grandeur as Moz again proves that though the world is full of crashing bores, his is a rapier wit. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK** I Am The Movie - Epitaph

MCS is one of those neither-fish-nor-fowl bands that nonetheless deserve a following. First, their album art needs to be mentioned: the cover appears to be a city in silhouette with red-orange flames billowing over it. Turns out, those flames are in fact roses. Tricked! They also use a clear mylar sheet to screen the buildings on, which is a cool touch. Okay, you can't stare at the art all day, what do they sound like? MCS on songs like "Shiver" and "Modern Chemistry" display an ear for catchy tunes and multiple octave vocals not unlike Weezer, but don't forget to throw in a synth and the occasional random, slippery guitar lick. They chose as a single/video one of their weaker songs, honestly, so if you like "The Future Freaks Me Out" even slightly, don't fear the rest of the album. I'd have told them to ditch the song altogether. MCS are also not afraid to pursue a melody, no matter how high up it goes, not unlike All-American Rejects. Check out the "Indoor Living," and note the dynamo drums. Skip up to "Don't Call It A Comeback" and dig when they get into aggressive mode. "Perfect Teeth" is blessed with a sugar hook and chorus that should've been their single. "Capital H" just radiates pop energy and the synth follows the vocals almost like a bagpipe. Their songs have the broken march choruses that crowds love to jump up and down with. Synth leads off a lot of songs or leads the way home from the verses, and they've chosen an intentionally retro synth sound. Once you get acclimated to that synth, their sound opens up. These musicians were probably weaned on Weezer and the Cars, and I'd say that's where they're coming from, but they've heard enough nu-punk bands to know how to rock when the situation calls for it. --- Paul Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **THE MOUNTAIN GOATS** Jam Eater Blues / Store, Straight Six - Sub Pop

Life is too short to refrain from eating jam out of the jar" is the first lyric that greets you. It's a Woody Guthrie acoustic guitar vibe crossed with college weirdness like Camper Van Beethoven. That also describes what Beck was up to before his big hit. Side Two gets fresh with the freewheelin' Bob Dylan sound. Singer-songwriter folk musician, Greenwich Village. These songs sound recorded straight to two-track live. The way folk used to be recorded. Keep it simple, the songs honest. "Straight Six" is a narrative of city madness like Travis Bickle in LA. "Powder blue paint job / Earl Scheib special? And I glide down the streets of this city / all night, up tight? Sometimes the sun shines / Like a beacon to the sick and weary." It's a Paul Schrader film done as a two-minute acoustic song. Here, on the third song, Mountain Goats seem capable of writing interesting music. The song is way too short so we'll have to wait for a full-length to find out if they live up to their promise. --Scott [top](#)

#### **MOVING UNITS** self-titled EP - Palm Pictures Records

These Los Angeles pretenders to the throne of indie rock have been called the West Coast's version of The Strokes. The bass heavy melodies are one of the main differences between those two outfits, giving Moving Units a bit more backbone in the mix. On this EP we get a quick glimpse of what these hepcats are trying to pull off in the studio. Instead of The Strokes, I hear The Rapture, The Faint and Blur. Definitely the singer's voice is nearer to Damon Albarn's Londoner disaffection than to Julian's Morrison cock swagger. The sound shouts out to 90s English import rock. "X And Y" is very much a lost track from Blur's "Park Life" and the ever-present, nearly disco bass lines could be as much form Heaven 17 as ABC. There is a determined guitar here but they've elected to push it down in the mix, making the dance elements dominate the songs. EPs are odd little things: usually a band is purging themselves of some sophisticated demos that the record company wasn't too stoked on. It works out good for the fans who get a handful of new tunes and can wait for the keeper tracks on the forthcoming long player. One of the guys in the band, Blake Miller, also recorded this EP, and my advice to him would be to hire an outside producer for their full length debut. A producer would've told him the bass tracks were too similar and nearly monotonous, and maybe would have helped him create some more interesting guitar tones. Let's hope they've picked someone with some ears. This is not a bad EP it just sounds like 4 demos that are meant to whet your appetite. I'll gladly listen to their LP when it comes out, but it had better be way above this rather average set of tunes. --- Paul Leeds [top](#)

#### **MSTRKRFT** - "The Looks" - NehruSita Inc./Last Gang Records [Dec 06]

For those popping disco Daft Punk fans out there jonesing for a new fix, MSTRKRFT is the band for you. The Ontario duo even copy DP's signature of disguising themselves - donning shiny gold hockey masks to underscore their disco nightmare. The music's fun and footloose if you're ready to rave your way into 2007. You may tire of the somewhat repetitive high hat, electronic clapping and cowbell after a few tracks, but standouts "Easy Love," "The Looks," and "Bodyworks" might see you pulling on your roller skates and hitting the rink for couples skate at midnight. The liner notes on this one offer thanks to the Canada Music Fund - if George Bush and Co. were funding a resurgence of coke-fueled disco bopping like our Canuck friends, we might not be stuck knee-deep in Middle East quicksand. ---Nate Fitz 7/11 [top](#)

**THE MUMMIES**, Death By Unga-Bunga - Estrus

The Mummies are the Budget Rock Lo-Fi Mono-sters of Trash-Punk. The band bandaged from head to toe in full Mummy regalia knocks it out fast, loud, & loose. The Mummies are fucking great, with bandages that hold in more raw guts than brains. Taking their cue from bands like The Ramones or The Cramps, The Mummies gnawed at Rocks' picked over bones & looked back to go forward. They drugged the sewers of the Radio's checkered past, found some sweltering musical numbers, (Like 'Down Home Girl') and pulled 'em kicking & screaming through the present and into the future. Once loaded into the Mummies garage, they stripped 'em down naked, got 'em drunk, and tore 'em in to shreds. Shake, shake, shaken (not stirred) with their own crunchy songs, (which'll really make yer ears bleed,) and you've got The Budget Rock Showcase. If they don't cut to the bone, & leave you in stitches, you'll never get it, so fuck off poseur. The Mummies live shows are legendary, with wild, drunken battles amongst the band (mono-sters don't play well with others). Although the BGI (Budget Rock International) Official press release actually admits that the Mummies were a scam. Claude Bols at BGI recruited various session players, and those bandages were the perfect gimmick to make all Mummies replaceable & interchangeable. Like flies circling a rotting corpse, lies, deceit and the stench of misdirected animosity have always hovered over the Mummies. The only thing holding it all together were those grubby bandages and stronger than dirt, crunchy melodies. Swearing and staggering, The Mummies stuck by their guts to 'never sell out'. Although offers of money, women & drugs poured it from the BIG Record Companies (including the cretins at Sup PoP) the Mummies stayed the course, and turned them all down flat. They also stuck by their Vinyl Mono Motto of Lo-Fi 45s and Lps, never a fucking CD. So check out this incredible "Death by Unga Bunga!!" CD. "Fuck Vinyl, 'cause this CD shit soundee so good.... now, with bass! That's right. Apparently, The Mummies did have a bass player, as these master tapes have revealed. Yup, 22 tracks culled from their now ridiculously overpriced, collector's item 45's.... PLUS: Four free bonus tracks not included." Now be forewarned, there are those of you out there who just won't 'get it', you dumb-fucks. The Mummies ARE IT, your puny brains just don't know what the fuck real Music is. There has been a bit of banter about this for a while, & The Mummies are the right band to drive home the point. Punk rock is not just fashion, or really tight, fast & uptight hardcore (it can be, but not limited to). Punk is fun and loose, and it comes from hoodlums in a garage pounding it out day after night. The Mummies put the Danger, the Piss & Vinegar and the Death (By Unga Bunga!!) back in Rock & Roll. So Don't Blow It, Buy it Clunk-Head.--- Bucket 9/11 [top](#)

**MUMMYDOGS** s/t on Frontier

Back before Ryan Adams there was Thin White Rope. No one gave too much of a damn about them, besides people in other bands, and they broke up in 1992. Now every yob in Texas who can lift an acoustic guitar is biting this sound. Guy Kyser, vocalist of Thin White Rope, is pretty pissed at having all his ideas bitten so he formed a new band, Mummydogs, named after those forgotten hotdogs that spin around all day long at the movie theater. Country blows, we all know. Think Luna, Wilco, Galaxie 500. The country of loaded revolvers and empty whisky bottles. Not that happy horseshit they slap onto Chevy commercials. The guitars suggest the needle-rock of Velvet Underground. They have a bit of fun with their lyrics (and the band name) but the music is no joke. "Tucos Theme" is a down-tempo instrumental with a biting Pixies lead. "Zulu Time" is an atmospheric drifter with bass and drums tapping out a metronome trance and distorted harmonica calling like a voice across the desert. Kyser's voice is smoker-deep and jaded-scratchy. His phrasing adds gravity that pulls down the melodies into a moody, all-night embrace. The song "Pearl" shows another side of the band, starts with Johanna Kyser's moist vocals and then bends into a climbing, deliberate guitar ladder like something from Joy Division. Ever need a record to listen to when driving to Vegas in the middle of the night? Mummydogs music is made for the scars of the highway that cut through the lightless desert, pulled towards some far off oasis. This record is a feedback-laden snake that shifts from rock to lo-fi in a drumbeat. Strange and interesting! Start with Track 2, "Fly Away" because the first song is the worst by a mile. --Matt Vermin [top](#)

**THE MURDER CITY DEVILS** Thelema - Sub Pop

Alas, the MCD are no more. This, their last effort, is a 5 song farewell to the world of murder, revenge, doomed sailors, and magick the MCD made their turf. These songs appear to be Side Three of their last LP "In Name And Blood." Same moody organ giving a funereal tension to the tales of lust and murder, same full-throated Jim Morrison wail coming out of Spencer Moody. They did these things amazingly well and no one is around to pick up the pieces. Band members have moved on to "Pretty Girls Make Graves" but I haven't heard them yet. One thing I especially liked about the MCD was the persona they created. Their albums and songs belie an interest in the dark world of magick, "thelema" being the name Aleister Crowley gave to his philosophy and organization that sprang from the ashes of the Ordo Templii Orientis. The dark imagery perfectly suited the dark themes. Maybe the "Pretty Girls" will rise from MCD's ashes to give us another brand of sinister magick. --Anton [top](#)

**MUSE** - "Black Holes and Revelations" - Warner Bros. [Aug 06]

Fuck you, you pretentious wankers. The only reason I gave this a spin is because [occasional Bunker punker] Andino Pellegrino was all gaga over Muse's last album. This new record makes me think he stopped taking his medication. On Muse's first album, there were some moments that worked and in particular the first track was the best song Yorke & Co. never recorded. It didn't stay with me, but was alright at the time. Now, like 5 years later, Muse sounds like the worst excesses of whiny voiced Thom Yorke and Rush. From the first song it's all whirly keyboards and bat-dat-whappita! drum fills. Viewing Muse without the Radiohead reference point is impossible, as they are, and always will be, a junior varsity, brokedown, thrift store, Japanese plastic miniaturization of Radiohead, who themselves have become fairly pretentious and tedious. I can't decide which song is the worst or best. I would rather listen to cats mating outside my window at 3 a.m. Even though I don't care for their single, the video is pretty cool, so I have to give 'em an extra point.---Leeds 3/11 [top](#)

**MUSTARD PLUG** "Masterpieces: 1991-2002" - Hopeless [Oct 2005]

Stop it. Just listen. Yes, Ska is not a cool thing to play any more, but for all those shite bands that dragged the sound through the mud there were dozens of unsung heroes playing it for years, like Mustard Plug. That scene at least saw guys and dolls dancing together, relatively few fistfights, and gave jobs to lots of horn players who otherwise would be out panhandling at freeway onramps. Most of the American ska bands took their cues from the revival Two Tone ska of early 80s England, and Mustard Plug bear the strongest resemblance to Bad Manners out of that scene. They incorporate some punk guitars like Operation Ivy did, but their sound is more party-friendly and good times, and basically sounds like nerdy dudes rocking out. MP were caught between the gears of the skapunk revival and the genuine punk revival, and like their sonic twins Skanking Pickle, they simultaneously built and then chased away their fan base. Unlike OP IV, Their lyrics are more carefree, and their image did not let kids transition from ska to punk so smoothly. For instance, they sing about thigh high nylons, not scoring junk in the Castro. And God bless them for that: thigh highs rank right up there with the wheel. This career-spanning retrospective showcases 19 tracks that chronicle MP's skanking dancehall tunes and their skapunk moshers, including "Brain On Ska" and "Everything Girl." ---Vermin 6/11 [top](#)

**MY ENEMY** "Roo" and "Khreis" EPs - Vapen & Godis [Feb 2006]

The Swedish band My Enemy return with 2 new EPs, one which is basically a remix project of the other. The "Roo" songs find the band moving away from their Belle & Sebastien tweeiness to a more electrified Stereolab cafe droning pop sound. "My Time Coming" is a charmingly gentle little pops ong with repetitive percussion and a circularity that makes the song seem twice as long as its three minute running time. My mental imagery involves slender college girls with lots of books and mod haircuts dancing a breezy little dance without sexual overtones and possibly without the intent of attracting anyone. This song has just enough kinetic energy to be dance music for those seemingly solitary, unencumbered, hip girls who are smarter than you and will not give you their phone number. .I read a lot into Swedish music, it's true. "Khreis" is altogether more involving as a song, with its strong OMD-like synth bouncing over the synthetic beats. It's also a poppy, uptempo song with a homemade charm, like My Enemy are unaware of how cutthroat hipsters are and further, that they don't care. The rudimentary drum machines get a bit obnoxious at times, and only on "Bothers Me" do they disappear into the music. Maybe that's why it's my favorite song on this EP. The final third of the song is taken over by a confident organ whoosh and interwoven vocals, culminating in their best work so far. The remix EP ("Khreis") is a curious thing and frankly does not do a whole lot for me. I don't know the guest mixers so I don't know what they bring to the table other than turning some decent pop songs into glitchy unlistenable wankery. This 2nd EP is totally wasted effort. "Roo" = 8/11, "Khreis" = 2/11 Leeds [top](#)

**MY ENEMY** "Enllil" EP - Vapen & Godis Records [June 2005]

My Enemy write songs with large windows in them that allow you to see inside their music, with its sunny room ambiance and placid charm. The sketches of stories that comprise their lyrics are like pages torn from a diary written by an observant but unhurried, unworried person. Maybe that's just part of the character of citizens of Gothenburg, Sweden. Although I know Gothenburg via a night in a cheap flat in Prague and a girl named Marie, but that's another story. One song has this novelisque

lyric, "...the gas fire is leaking, fills the house with smoke, but it's in the morning so we don't die, we just gotta get out in the snow for a while..." This EP has a quotation from "Watership Down" and dancing bunnies on the cover. Somehow they fit perfectly with the bubbling sweet melodies. Imagine The Album Leaf playing with Mates Of State but not trying to look cool at the New York discos. My Enemy are a trio with a brother-sister core, Helena and Leonel Jaderberg, and pal Samira Englund. Helena's breezy clear vocals recall the caf? moments of Stereolab and melodic Fiery Furnaces songs. Beneath her bright vocals are minimal electronica, not as kitsch or kinetic as Postal Service, but not as chilled out as Album Leaf. There is a lazy calm about these songs, just melody and music, nothing dark or exorcised. This would be a good listen on a weekend morning, the day full of promise and you warm up with black coffee and a pulp novel. These 5 songs are clever and possess a breezy melancholic charm, enough melody to sneak inside your mind with curious vignettes in the lyrics. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### MY HOTEL YEAR 'The Curse' - Doghouse Records

They don't give you a whole lot of breathing room, either you are going to immediately dig their doubled up vocals spread an octave apart and happy rock, or you're going to search frantically for something to make it stop (off switch, vodka, ballpeen hammer). The energy and enthusiasm for getting crowds moving and clapping their hands wafts from this record like smoke from a forest fire. They sound really happy, and there's nothing wrong with that. Musically they love hitting super thick chords all together that seem to stand on their heads and shake the footlights. Somewhat less successful is the integration of the singer's range with the chugging guitars. For my ears, his range is just too high and borrows too much from the trendy Fuse TV music of the day. The MHY recipe comes up better on "Not Bad (For Ninja)" which lets them crank up the distortion. The middle eight bridge has some heavy metal noodling which drains rather than pumps the energy. The singer is better following this looser style than when he tries to get all emo and girly and quiet. I like the music but I don't like the vocals, so it kind of doesn't work for me. --- Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

#### THE MYRIAD "You Can't Trust A Ladder" - WEA [August 2005]

This Seattle band is the American version of Muse. All of the hallmarks are to be found on their debut album: the super-singing, the wailing solos and instrumentation, the grand songs that reach into the operatic. The Myriad sound so much like Muse and "Bends" era Radiohead that in blind taste tests you'd never know you'd been slipped something else. While I am not a fan of Muse, I do appreciate that both of these bands excel in musicianship and musicality. The Myriad spend a few minutes on this album pandering a ballad (The Last Time) but barring that, they write mini-epics for arena crowds. For me everything sounds really slick and produced and calculated, like session musicians getting together (but then again, I didn't mind that very thing when it was called Levitation). In short, this is what a major label spent its money on knowing they will be able to place Myriad songs in films and commercials. This record is an all or nothing proposition: either they are adopted by the millions who love those giant bands or they will sink without a trace. This is a good band but just way too pop for me to care about. ---Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

#### MYSTERY JETS - "Zoo Time" - Dim Mak [June 07]

Here is an album full of eccentric English pop mannerisms and delicious ear candy. The Mystery Jets hail from a British holiday island called, I kid you not, Eel Pie Island. What's worse, that the English eat eel pies, that eel pies exist, or that they named an island after them? At any rate, the MJ's lead single "Diamonds In The Dark" is the kind of throwback to beautiful "alternative" music that didn't try so hard to be cool or hip or clever, and just was all three of those things, naturally. To my ears, their sound is reminiscent of the assured pop of The Icicle Works crossed with the loping melodic inventiveness of XTC. There are two other completely awesome things about the MJs, which you may have heard: one is that the singer's dad is in the band on keyboards (and he's good), the other is that the singer uses a wheelchair. Other epic songs include the title cut and "Purple Prose of Cairo." --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

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#### THE NAGG "Very, Extremely, Really, Rock and Roll" - Dollar Records [March 06]

But that's good! Amy Ward (AKA Bonny Scott formerly of AC/DShe) Belts it out as the Band Kick their Guitars, Bass, and Drums around for good measure and in good time. THE NAGG knock out a couple of high-octane original songs that are wicked and wise beyond their years. Also chugging through some rock covers of greater and lesser renown. THE NAGG are a notoriously amazing live landslide, and this disc backs up those accusations. Are THE NAGG anachronistic? Do you still listen to Rock 'n Roll in 2006? If so then just get the disc or see them live, you won't be disappointed. THE NAGG are straight ahead, kick ass rock, bite-down on this noise if you can handle the hard stuff. --- 7/11 Brother Bucket [top](#)

#### NARNACK RECORDS IS... "A Fist First Comp" - Narnack Records

If this New York label was an animal, it would be a 15 pound rat with metal spikes dangling from its tail. They're small, but they are mighty - and vicious. This excellent compilation throws together some of the many disparate elements on their roster and gives newbies a sample of their noisy tastes. Many of these tracks are from upcoming releases so it's a chance to hear it first. Tunes from indie gods The Fall, thrash from the Coachwhips, new wave punk from X27, slide guitar blues from Langhorne Slim, inscrutability from Yellow Swans, and bleeding eardrums from Guitar Wolf, all play happily together. Two songs from the upcoming Fast Fourier album guarantee that Narnack has another great new band waiting to be sprung on a hapless public. --- Leeds 9/11 [top](#)

#### NARNACK RECORDS SAMPLER 2 - Narnack Records

An interesting sampling of Narnack's diverse roster of artists. At it's best, DJ Shitbird makes you want to get up and party, Langhorne Slim delivers finger-licking urban-country ballads, Coolwhips hit home with a guitar heavy, harmonica ending jangle that forces your foot to move in an up and down rhythmic motion. Narnack, keep it up! --- Honey Thunder 6/11 [top](#)

#### NASHVILLE PUSSY "Get Some" - Spitfire [Oct 2005]

To get Nashville Pussy (the band, I mean) you have to know that this is sleazy but funny good time rock and roll, that this band is having a hell of a good time. If you didn't come to party, you really, really need to get the fuck out. This 4th milestone in their career starts with a growly, "who wants some pussy!" answered by some girls shrieking, "we do!" This is how you kick out some Ted Nugent/AC DC style jams. Until this record, I did not know I liked Nashville Pussy. NP seem not all that far away from Supersuckers now, with songs about "Hate And Whiskey" and lyrics like "a bag of weed, a six pack of Bud, I'm like a pig, in my own mud." Throughout this tour of the moonshine and meth South, Nashville Pussy play on the redneck good ol' boy stereotypes and have some fun rocking out just like the 80s never happened. ---Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

#### NATION OF TWO "The Kingdom" - [misplaced their label, but will post it soon!]

If you were to throw Nation of Two's debut cd, The Kingdom, into your cd player without knowing anything about them, as I did, you may think to yourself, "they've got potential." But, the Seattle duo (drums and guitar) has been at it for seven years now and seem quite comfortable where they are at. The openly "queer" band makes no bones about it. They are what they are, and that is Phil Vignec, a drummer with a magnetic, brooding voice and Darius Morrison, a guitarist with the pipes of a teenager saying "fuck off." The two compliment the other surprisingly well. One tells and the other asks in "Blood," a song demanding "...my blood is not thicker than water." Songs like "Nation of Two" and "Dai Sil Kim-Kim Gibson" read like thoughts put on paper with no intention of applying melody, but are quite musicalicious. Nation of Two is definitely playing to an audience. That audience may be you, it may not, but the duo is their own best audience and critics. They play music for themselves and as their bio describes, they create what they think music should sound like. The title track, "The Kingdom" is so emotionally apocalyptic with lyrics like, "...and I know our robes will fit us well, we tried them on at the gates of hell." But I think Darius describes Nation of Two's credo in "All Behold," as he repeats "you have to play like it's the last 10 minutes of your life." They definitely do. ---Evan Rude 7/11 [top](#)

#### NEON BLONDE - "Chandeliers In The Savannah" - Dim Mak Records [May 2006]

Neon Blonde is a two man project featuring Blood Brothers vocalist Johnny Whitney and drummer Mark Gajadhar. The sound is a strange one yet interesting and pretty unique. Perhaps "sounds" would be more appropriate, as the only discernible common denominator is Whitney's high pitched vocals which warble in and out like a coked out dolphin or sweep across the top with



falsetto furiousness over a wide variety of sampled and live landscapes. Some of the songs sort of stagger and stumble wildly with an electric jerkiness that can either be off putting or intriguing, in a word, somewhat hit or miss. There is a wide variety to the sound however and all sorts of unusual electronic or organic instrument combinations are utilized with multiple personality innovation. Some could call this inconsistency but I thought it showed a cool versatility and openness to experimentation that's sadly lacking in the contemporary music scene. The press kit kept drawing comparisons to early Roxy Music, Bowie, or Eno, but perhaps more for their versatility and genre defying inventiveness than any actual similarity of sound. Neon Blonde is generally a lot more dissonant than any of those legendary predecessors. "Chandeliers in the Savannah" is a zoo-like collection of musical animals that all have the same head as far as vocals go, but if you take a shine to Whitney's style of squealing shrieking vocals you're bound to want to feed at least one or two of them. Because of the diversity this is a hard one to peg, but worth checking out. 6 on a scale of 1-11. The Swedetop

#### **NERF HERDER** My EP - Fat Wreck Chords

The kings of lowbrow punk fun are back. Combining the out-of-print My Records EP and some b-sides, this collection features the Nerfs at their funniest. Exhibit A: "Love Sandwich," in which Parry struts his masculine goods with lyrics like, "This ain't the kind of sandwich / you get from your mommy, your mommy ain't never seen / such a whole lot of salami." Bert and Ernie were dropped off the lyric sheet from the original, and "Bernie" inserted to avoid some lawsuits, but the song is still catchy and hilarious. Nerf Herder's tunes rank up there with "Too Drunk To Fuck" in the all-time greats of rude-yet-hilarious punk classics. On "Hotel California," the earnest lyrics to The Smiths' "Meat Is Murder" are parodied to much amusement. The usual helpings of sex-related imagery are on "hand" as it were, including "Fight For Your Right To Masturbate" and "I've Got A Boner For X-Mas." "Hang up your Christmas stocking / so I can put my cock in." It makes you laugh. The Nerfs are known for their power chords as well as their double-entendres. These songs are the most direct in their attack on your funny bone since the debut album. Parry's writing stance, as the sexually frustrated high school misfit, is always hilarious, and always great fun to hear. He's making a career of being the loner with a boner. --- Paul Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **NERF HERDER** American Cheese - Honest Don's

How much fun can one band have creating an album? With some artists, creation is a painful process involving much hair pulling and breast beating. Not so with NH and their newest brain stepchild, American Cheese. Like the original scruffy-looking nerf herder himself, Harrison Ford (there's an Empire Strikes Back reference for all you geeks out there), American Cheese is both witty and smooth. From the cheerfully independent "Welcome to my World" to the last note of "New Jersey Girl," Parry and the gang supplied this fan with music that kept her toes tapping - and almost got her into an accident on I-5. "Cashmere" stood out as my favorite, with "Jenna Bush Army" providing the proper amount of political commentary for any nerd rock album. Nerf Herder eschewed the traditional I-hated-high-school motif that seems to be so popular in today's pop punk music. Instead, they focused on a subtle commentary on American lifestyles by making them funny without being laughable. Through countless listenings and conversations about wit, happy music and how much we would pay to see NH in concert, I can't think of any higher recommendation for American Cheese than that my dad liked it. One day in the not too distant future, Parry will write a serious album of bittersweet tunes that will blow Ryan Adams off the map. Until then, here's some delicious cheese. -Angel Dylan [top](#)

#### **NERVES** New Animal - Thrill Jockey

I'm really surprised this band is not on Sub Pop. They go crazy for this kind of rock up there in Seattle. These guys are out of Chicago and are representing the big rock sound like their city-mates Big Black, 'cept with real loud drums. This three-piece at times reminded me of Husker Du and also of gutsy acts like Seaweed and The Grifters. It's a rock album made by guys who obviously learned their chord changes from punk rock but are keeping their sound focused on now, not nostalgia. The songs use raw guitar thuggery to get the message across. No pretty-boy chorus effects or delays here. The vocals are shared by the bass and guitar players which always gives a band a richer sound. While some Husker Du moments exist, Nerves are much scruffier, dirtier, and rougher than those Minnesota boys ever were, and have their heads set on destruction rather than the Beatles-esque melodies that Mould and Hart came up with, but still, mentioning them in the same sentence with the Du is to be taken as a high compliment. --Scott [top](#)

#### **THE NERVOUS RETURN** "The Sex, The Drugs...The Nervous Return" - La Salle Records [March 06]

This record is short, it's only got five songs on it, but it serves up that kind of mindless enjoyment that is arguably one of the best things about listening to music. Well, listening to music you like anyway. There are a few things here that I'm not sure what to make of though. Like this pre-song admission from lead singer Jason Muller: "I've been masturbating with a magazine." I mean, that's great and all. But what the hell does it have to do with, well, anything? Thankfully, however, the music is so damn good that it makes a non-issue out of these random moments and even seems to give them a charm they may not have had otherwise. There's not a single song on this EP I don't like but the bookends of the disc, track one and five, are my favorite. "Bad Girl" is funk music you can dance to mixed with much "Flight of the Bumblebee on crack" inspired electric guitar noise. The song seems to be about a 15-year-old prostitute and sobering lyrics about a girl "on the streets" are interspersed with suggestive lines you might hear on a made-for-cable TV porno. Lines like "I'm a real bad girl," and "you know you want it" are an odd choice for a song about an underage girl making money on her back but, strangely enough, this is one of the most inventive songs I've heard in awhile. The last track, "Dennis Woodruff (actor)," wraps you up in the comfort of melodic rock (not quite indie, not quite, dare I say it, "alternative") and Muller's nicotine-laced vibrato. The song is soul food for the misplaced and homesick and, if this is how you are currently feeling, it will be your anthem for the foreseeable future. ---8/11 Melissa Treolo [top](#)

#### **NEW BLOOD** "The New Rock 'n' Roll Vol. 3" - Artrock

New music is not a wasteland. If you want to get down and dirty on your trash rock dollar, check out New Blood. 25 tracks from some underground secrets. Mostly. Some of these bands are neither new (Hellcopters, PGMG, et al) and some are not underground either (The Donnas). Pressing on, most of these bands share the rock swagger of "Exile"-era Rolling Stones with the booze 'n' sex of Guns 'n' Roses (a band I loathe). Gutter whiskey rock, sometimes laced with 60s psychedelia and sometimes just dragged through the 70s Sunset Strip. Pretty Girls Make Graves launch the album off to a manic start with "Speakers Push The Air" - if you aren't familiar with PGMG by now, you're blowing it. Another femme-fronted outfit, The Hells, send their love in a noisy, smashy rocker called "Time Killer." They've got a new record out that should be had by those who want to get rocked hard by a hot dame. Out of the 25 bands featured, most are pretty good tunes. A couple comp bombs exist, as is always the case. This is a great look at a whole new raft of bands that are tearing it up in the time-honored greasy and dirty rock tradition. Pick this up and you'll find at least 5 new bands you're gonna want to buy full-lengths from. To whet your appetite, the best 10 tracks are by: PGMG, The Hells, Hot Snakes and their usual kinetic charm, The Soledad Brothers' homage to the Stones, The Wednesdays' gearhead anthem, Terrashima's white-knuckled ride sounding like the Zeke of old, Sludgefeast's take on the Makers, Mighty Frapp's tambourine laden paeon to Exile On Mainstreet, LA's own 60s crushers The Flash Express, Weird War's weird white soul attack, and Electric Shocks who recall the acidic 60s revivalism of Miracle Workers and Morlocks. Is that 11? This comp will go down well with some Jack Daniels and someone blowing ciggie smoke in your face. It's dirty and ready for action. Comp also features Gluecifer, Sweatmaster, The Paybacks, The Rattlesnakes, The Grips, The Hellcopters, The Casanovas, Forcis, The Bellrays, The Donnas, The Washdown, The Rocks, The Black Madonnas. 7/11 --- Leeds [top](#)

#### **THE NEW CRAZY compilation** - Deep Elm Records [July 2005]

This sampler boasts 20 cuts by the stars of the prestigious Deep Elm label, the group who acted like an incubator that nurtured and birthed the post-emotive-hardcore scene. A few of the most impressive artists are Surrounded, Slowride, Desert City Soundtrack, Planes Mistaken For Stars, and The Appleseed Cast, all of whose back catalog I highly recommend. In this short list, it's hard to pick favorites because those five bands have delivered brilliance, full stop. Sweden's Surrounded are a panoply of lullaby tranquility and otherworld pop, like Mercury Rev and Sparklehorse and Flaming Lips all holding hands in some forest rite. Slowride are a gritty rock band that stands outside the genre while drafting on progenitors of the scene like Jawbreaker and even Husker Du. For a descent into madness, DCS will take you there and back. PMFS and TAC best typify a sound that now defies titles, a sound that towers over others who eventually ruined the three letter term tossed about like confetti over every band that claimed to own a punk record but wanted to bare their souls onstage. At any rate, this collection features a wide range in genre and temperaments, some great, some mediocre, some suck, but it's well worth your ten bucks. --- Leeds 7/11. [top](#)

#### **NEW ENGLAND ROSES** "Face Time With Son" - DoggPony Records [May 2006]

This mystifying project from members of Le Tigre and Barr was over three years in the making and is loaded with fragile vocal

musings draped over some scattershot drumming and the occasional keyboard texture. All of it's light and airy and doesn't pack any sort of punch. It's not too surprising to find out that The New England Roses is a "spare time" project because most of the material comes across as unfinished, especially in the vocal departments. I like music with some honest rawness occasionally but most of these songs sound like they were just fucking around in the studio and accidentally recorded it. Why they released it is beyond me, although maybe there's some hardcore Le Tigre fans out there who would eat the shit right out of their asses no matter what it tasted or should I say, sounded like. Perhaps this was an experiment by the band members to see if anyone would buy it based solely on the reputation of their other projects, because there ain't shit here worth caring about. There's some folksy spoken word type shit that would reek of pretension if the lyrics weren't so bad. Quite honestly it's really hard to take seriously and I can't figure out who this record's aimed at. It sounds like what it is...a downtime vanity project that even the musicians themselves placed less value on than their "real" bands. The closest they come to sounding like they're even trying to play real songs are on the covers they do, which include George Michael, Dave Matthews, and Tracy Chapman, but even those sound like shitty Casio keyboard experiments, and the selection of covers hints at some sort of contempt for their audience. Which I'm happy to return. 2 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede [top](#)

#### **THE NEW TRANSIT DIRECTION** "Wonderful Defense Mechanisms" - Some Records

TNTD limber up on the first track before getting down to business and slinging some cool shit on the 2nd tune, "Survival 101." The way the guitars crank through harmonic pick slashing and then drop heavily on blown-out distorted chords is a gritty challenge to the perfect as clockwork chord changes you hear everywhere. These distorted stabs of angular notes owe more to Unwound and Gang Of Four than to any contemporary acts. TNTD are a band reviving the guts 'n' blood forward motion of intensely loved but poor-selling legends like Jawbreaker and Jawbox. The two guitars (Josh Asher and Jake Hawley) take great pleasure in setting your teeth on edge and playing notes that hang unresolved and dissonant. As a band, TNTD value their rhythm section (Dan Whitesides and Levi Lebo) enough to back off and let the lower end have uninterrupted moments that let the songs breathe. Asher's vocals are a bit more agile than might be anticipated, favoring the sanguine registry of Cave In and Brazil over the guttural yelpings of their stated heroes (see above). The minor criticism would be that there is a tendency to over sing some of the lyrics, especially on a couple of choruses that are blown into grandiose passages. You don't whip out a guitar solo in every bridge, just like you don't need to sing and hold a high note in every chorus. The occasional over-indulgence is a product of Asher being able to actually sing, and you don't blame Thom Yorke for letting loose, so why blame Asher? The sugar of his voice often provides counterbalance to the grinding guitars, like on the excellent "Conditions." "Three Word Distrust" is an impassioned flaming arrow shot into the heart of someone who just can't make a decision. "What are you waiting for, I think about it all the time." The direction that TNTD moves in takes accomplished vocals and welds it to a restless two guitar architecture that echoes the drama of Jawbox and the release of No Knife. "Mechanical Failure" is TNTD at their best: the final third of the song finding the guitars tying each other up in ascending knots. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB** - EP - Modular Records [Aug 07]

The New Young Pony Club serves up pop confection in another '80s timewarp. Singer Tahita channels Debbie Harry and gets provocative on the EP's opener "Ice Cream," a nice summer tune to get us dancing and in the mood for a dip of the dipstick. Or as she says, "I can give you what you want...come on and dip your dick in." The many re-mixes of this number are sure to be lighting up dancefloors from Sydney to Ibiza for summer '07. It's too bad Tipper Gore's daughters are all grown up now, or we might have the ex-Second Lady going after London's NYPC and their lascivious lyrics. Twenty years after Prince first dirtied up the airwaves, "Darling Nikki" still seems a little racy, but the Pony Club's just throwing the tawdry lyrics out for fun. And maybe to get a little attention. While the new-wavish guitar and keyboards they lift from that same era isn't mind-blowing, it is fun. If you're not ready to boogie to "Ice Cream," at least step out on the dance floor and bop your head to "Dancey," where Tahita even throws in Karate Kid references, singing she'll, "wax on /wax off to a different scheme." We'll see if the Pony Club can keep us interested beyond this EP of candy-coated pop. ---Nate Fitz 6/11 [top](#)

#### **NINE BLACK ALPS** "EP" - Tiny Evil [July 2005]

An introduction to the new grunge Mancunians named after a poem by Sylvia Plath, the infamously depressing author who gassed herself to death. What is surprising about these flannel-clad longhairs is they sound utterly familiar. You think you know this band first time you hear "Shot Down," with it's insistant concatenations. Like their single "Cosmopolitan," both songs feature fast guitars and multitracked choruses, making the vocals velvety. They lay down a screaming solo on "Shot Down" that gives some power to the rather subdued, almost Libertines influenced song. Of these 5 songs, 4 are available on the LP and appear to be the same versions, so that's not much incentive to buy if you're going to pick up the full length, although the best of these 5 is the lone track not available on the LP, "Ilana Song." It has less of radio friendly hook and to me it seems this must be closer to their real sound, before knob twiddler Rob Schnapf got ahold of them and tried to make them sound like a cross between Vines and Jet. For a brand new band, the singer's vocals sound road-tested and hardened and likewise these songs are very professional without any of the loose, manic feel that early records usually have, which means this is overproduced intended straight for radio or MTV. ---Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **NINE BLACK ALPS** "Everything Is" - Island [June 2005]

What if Kurt and Krist and Dave were born in Manchester? That's the general buzz following around Nine Black Alps, from the hair-in-face flannel shirtedness to the mid-90s Sub Pop sound. As a Nirvana fan, let me tell you NBA is no Nirvana, not even a pasty English version. They do bang out some good tunes, notably "Cosmopolitan," released last October as a single, but they have harmonizing backup vocals and sound just a little too pretty. Instead of Nevermind, expect Failure and Bush (remember them?) Singer Sam does not have the edge-of-forever shattered vocals of Mr Cobain nor the "fuck you" attitude that flowed through his veins (along with half the GNP of Afghanistan). Sam has a nice low pitched, intimate manner that can sell a good melody, like on "Headlights" - "it's not like I asked for this..." "Shot Down" is one of the better energetic songs unconcerned with sounding smooth enough for hit radio. Although NBA sound decent enough, there's nothing really there to make you get excited. We've heard this type of rock before, just not from Mancs. If you got a twenty burning a hole in your pocket, pick this up, or wait for the next hype of the week. --- Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

#### **NINJA GUN** "Smooth Transitions" - Barracuda Sound

Here in a Blue state we often get the wrong idea about our countrymates in those Red states, particularly in the South, like Georgia. Ninja Gun come from Valdosta, GA and are perhaps a bridge between the pastoral country of the South and the industrial North. Their sound blends the twangy leads and waltz times of country with the power chord, stop/start mechanics of So Cal punk. The needle swings deep into the punk rock zone, unlike a band suchas Jackass that primarily stays within the modes of country while playing it fast and heavy. Ninja Gun are most like a reincarnation of Smoking Popes, but where the Popes used 40s crooning/Morrissey as a jumping off point, NG use power trash and chugging downstrokes as their launch pad. Both bands are packaged in a very user-friendly, listenable sound geared towards a mass market appeal. NG have a singer that is less likely to swamp the stage with mood and more likely to turn on those who like a slightly raw, edgy crispness. Think Honorary Title, Replacements, and protopunk bands like Dead Boys to get an idea of Jonathan Coody's voice on "Unpopular Mechanics," a voice both cigarette-harsh and whisky smooth. The band is having fun with the music and presents itself as slightly ironic but musically earnest. The production and mixing on this record is superb, giving NG a indie sound that is ready for the radio. Have to say that I think this band name is a loser and will hold them back. It sounds a little cutesy and juvenile and I have no idea what connotations are supposed to be derived from it. This sound is well against the current grain as seen on FuseTV, and because it comes from an off the musical map place like Valdosta, GA, it should give the Blue states a little more faith in their Red state brethren. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **DANBERT NOBACON** - "The Library Book of the World" - Bloodshot [Oct 2007]

Danbert is one of the agent provocateurs in the anarcho-syndicalist collective Chumbawamba; a man of principle, poetry and passion. And usually some witty, self-deprecating lyrics and an ear for a catchy tune. He's ditched the slicked up pop of his former outfit and here becomes a rowdy, raunchy pirate folk balladeer. Equal parts Manu Chao and Joe Strummer. With his Pine Valley Cosmonaut backing band, Nobacon shifts from folk-punk to gypsy rock and more. Nobacon is having a blast, playing a trove of demented characters (What Was That?) and enjoys a laugh even at his own expense (Singe My Bald Head). Recommended. --- 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### **NOFX** The War on Errorism - Fat Wreck Chords

NOFX goes political in their 147th album, released on Fat Mike's label instead of the usual Epitaph. With lyrics covering the spectrum from "safe" punk rock in "Separation of Church and Skate" to a rant on apathy in "Franco Un-American," NOFX take a stand against lame music, presidential policy and eating meat. Don't get me wrong; there are plenty of sophomoric lyrics and the usual joke punk you've come to expect from the guys. "She's Nubs" is about a girl with no arms and legs who goes to punk

rock shows, and "Mattersville" describes a "gated community where cops can't come in/a neighborhood for punks over the hill." After all, a complete changeover from joke rockers to political commentators in one album might lose NOFX a large portion of their fan base. But it looks like Fat Mike and the gang are willing to take that risk, pounding out harsh realities more poetic but equally as left-wing as our own dear Paul Leeds. Fat Mike started punkvoter.com, a website dedicated to informing the punk rock community about politics and getting people to the voting booths to make a difference. Fat Wreck is also the label behind the "Not My President" t-shirts. The CD is hysterically enhanced with videos to "Franco Un-American," last summer's ode to George Dubya, "Idiot Son of an Asshole," and more. All is done with a driving belief that what they're advocating - self-education and political agitation - is absolutely right, which deserves respect whether you agree with their agenda or not. It's also done with brilliant guitar riffs and a drum kit that sounds like if it's hit any harder it might just explode. And while the music itself is good, it is the lyrics that make this album successful. I'm not a huge fan of NOFX or joke-punk, but this is an album I'm glad to have. It is critically important for music fans to get involved in the way our country is run, and apathy is no longer an option. NOFX take responsibility and action, and I would like to see other bands jump at the chance to use their influence for more than bitching about girlfriends and how life sucks. Go buy this record, check out punkvoter.com, sign up for daily headlines by email from the BBC and other international news sources. Do like Fat Mike and educate yourself. It may be the most important thing you ever do. For being braver than most popular bands, some great videos, promoting education and denouncing apathy, not to mention for my cracked ribs and concussion in the NOFX Warped Tour pit last summer, this record gets an 8. Go buy it and a newspaper, right now. --- Angel Dylan 8/11 [top](#)

#### **NO HOLLYWOOD ENDING** - "Everybody's Talking" - Merovingian Music [Oct 2007]

What is this? Record starts with some prog-rock chords and then shifts into a codpiece heavy metal sound, and then features 1/64 note drumming and a guest appearance from the Cookie Monster on vocals. Somehow, in the background of all this nonsense, the actual melody is carried by synthesizer stolen from The Faint. But wait, there's more: on the chorus they harmonize like Bad Religion. I give up. --- Leeds 3/11 [top](#)

#### **NOISE UNIT** "Voyeur" - Metropolis Records [August 2005]

Noise Unit adorns their new collection with black and white fetish photography of a bobbed, bare chested, t-back sporting woman cavorting in a landscape of twisted metal and ruined architecture. The inside tray photo is a close up of the aforementioned girl's ass, so that's a good sign, as every other elektro group seems to be whinging about having to repress their boy-on-boy love. NU deliver heavy beats that dominate the mix, sounding either live recorded or sequenced live. Especially check out the wicked drums on "Liberation." It's kind of like vintage Skinny Puppy with sample voices. NU are an electronic rock group not dance band. No doubt these are arse-thumping beats, but NU are not mopey pale boys dancing solo in the corner, they are bringing an electronic sound right down on the front row seats. Vocals are largely nonexistent on the record and the songs fall into two varieties: big beat drum led numbers and low energy soundscapes, split evenly. Favorite track is "Seclusion" which takes a page from the Aphex Twin playbook and adds more compelling beats than AT are known for. "Voyeur" features some porno sounds mixed low in the background but hopefully the sounds are the cover model recorded live in flagrante delicto. ---Vermin 6/11 [top](#)

#### **NO KNIFE** Riot For Romance - Better Looking Records

No Knife should have as much success as similarly inclined bands like Jimmy Eat World and The Jealous Sound. This San Diego band has been turning out great records for years now (this is their fourth long player). To be fair, the only reason JEW is popular now is they made some watered down songs that turned into KROQ hits. No Knife have yet to score that elusive hit single, but if it means dumbing down their music, I prefer this. The success will come. Several of these tracks could find a happy home on the radio, so it's not the music that's at fault, it's the lack of the big label money machine payola bribery system that gets singles added. NK have always been loved for their ringing guitar lines and vocal acrobatics. The new record adds some discordant guitar chops to the soup, the familiar only made sweeter. The production is clean and sounds expensive, getting a great sound out of the drums on a small budget is not easy. "Permanent For Now" is vintage NK, Ryan and Mitch sharing vocals, the guitar using some non-standard scales, music vaulting between melodic bridges and full-armed chords. The 7" geek will recognize some songs on here that were previously issued, "Flechette" in particular. It's still worth the price. "Parting Shot" is another perfect slice of NK genius. Tumbling guitars and Ryan's lower-register vocals and the steady coldblooded rhythm section - they should be huge. -- Paul Leeds [top](#)

#### **NONE MORE BLACK** File Under Black - Fat Wreck Chords

One of the best bands on the Fat Wreck Chords list of punk rock merrymakers, None More Black are the offspring of the East Coast hardcore outfit Kid Dynamite. Kid Dynamite arose from the ashes of Lifetime, which capitalized on a sound not totally unlike Jawbreaker. These New Jersey punks have not strayed far from their former incarnations' gravel 'n' grit sound. Get "Bivouac"-era Jawbreaker and "Goddamnit"-era Alkaline Trio on two stereos at once, and you'll hear None More Black inbetween the grooves. None More Black, despite its hoary genealogy, is the best band Jason Shevchuck's been in. They are far more genuine sounding than Kid Dynamite (which tended to try and sound hardcore-r-than-thou), and the songs are more creative and more diverse too. The band takes their name from one of the sillier moments in "This Is Spinal Tap." It's a good sign when a band wears its humor as well as its heart on its sleeve. Don't get me wrong, despite the name and some of the song titles, NMB is not a joke band. Listen to a song like "Drop The Pop" and you'll hear blistering vocals and extremely catchy chords guaranteed to turn the area in the front of the stage into a churning, frothing feeding frenzy. Bass player Paul Delaney also plays in the overwrought uber-punk band Kill Your Idols. No wonder he's stoked to be in this band. NMB is a lot more fun as well as being more listenable. Although NMB sport two guitarists they both play chords with an absolute minimum of leads or vocal runs, if any at all. Why they aren't a trio is a mystery because their sound is chunky enough to justify it. And you make more money if there's one less mouth to feed. I like hearing a band blasting through songs without having to layer on too many guitars (if the music calls for it). "Nods To Nothing" actually starts with a guitar line over the chords but then settles down into one of the nearest Jawbreaker impersonations of I've heard. Jason's vocals really hit a groove on this song. The best things going for this band are a singer with a gravel-filled throat and a no-nonsense rhythm section. The sound is pretty stripped down by today's standards: straight ahead hardcore that never heard of pop-punk. For fans of One Time Angels, Tiltwheel, Jawbreaker, Lifetime and those who don't need sugary sweet confections in place of music. --- Paul Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

#### **NO ROSES** "Hell or High Water" -State of Mind Recordings [June 2006]

No Roses plays high energy screaming hardcore punk and if you like the sound of that, then you'll like the sound of this. Well played with high intensity, every song is a screaming, spitting, and hollering indictment of ...something or other. Does it really matter? The point is to deliver audio blasts of high speed punk and that they do in spades. While there's no shortage of bands playing this style of music today and I usually rip on most of them for some reason I had to step back from personal prejudice and take a trip in the Way Back machine to when I first heard bands like Minor Threat or Aggression and how fuckin' great it made me feel to have music that articulated genuine feelings of anger, rage, contempt for "The System" and whatever else pissed me off on a particular day. No Roses plays tight hardcore today, here and now, in your face with no apologies and most importantly come across with sincerity while doing it. 8 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede. [top](#)

#### **NO USE FOR A NAME** "Keep Them Confused" - Fat Wreck Chords [June 2005]

I have a friend who knows NUFAN and says they're all real standup guys, so that biases me in their favor. They have certainly passed the test of time, at least 15 years as a punk band. I have none of their albums and can't speak to the evolution of their sound. I can say that this album sounds a lot like Lagwagon. The vocals have that Capey high melodiousness, here softened with multiple tracks that make it sound like a choir of three Tony Slys are on each song. The punk is also cast aside in favor of progressive pop. The guitars are warm but have totally no punch and are buried in the mix. Is there even a bass player? It's all midrange tones. They fall back on certain gimmicks that should have been edited out, like the "bick-biggadaboom" drum pattern repeated like a loop without pause on "Part Two," and a pick slide on "For Fiona." My favorite is "Apparition." It's exceedingly mellow and underplayed, almost fey, but it's true to what NUFAN are going for. They want to be a melodic pop band with occasional guitar parts - punks no more! Don't know what NUFAN were like when Mr Foo Fighter played guitar for them but I am astonished at how gutless most of this sounds. They must have rocked more back then. This is not really my thing, it is sweet pop without committing to abandoning the posture of "punk." The lyrics read better than they play, for what that's worth. There is some poignancy when reading them but the delivery gets too saccharine. --- Vermin 5/11 [top](#)

#### **NORCAL COMPILATION 2005** - Agent Records [Sept 2005]

I know NoCal hates us down in here in LA for drinking their water and having better looking women, I wonder what they've been up to musically? Ever since that night when Jello Biafra and I got our asses kicked at Gilman, I haven't been back. Agent



Records presents 22 bands you don't know. We get a ton of weird bands at the Bunker, and I've only heard of 2 of them! One is the esteemable Communique, read our reviews of them to get the point, and the other is Shafter, a sort of math-rocky emo band, crunchy choruses and earnest vocals. This comp hosts a wide array of talent levels, as if some of these bands just formed while others have been doing it for donkey's ears. I hear the bands coalescing around certain genres: around the All-American Rejects / Limbeck / Mae banner rally Dexter Danger, Overview, Deflator Mouse, The Audrye Sessions, Tera Melos, Tragedy Andy, and The Rum Diary. Over at the Fat Wreck flag can be found My Former Self, Muckruckers, The Phenomenauts, Desa, Love Equals Death, Try Failing and A Burning Water. The rest fall into the Curiosity bin, which is not to say bad, because one of the best cuts is by curiosity band Judgement Day (sic), with a bevy of classic strings churning into a rock buildup. However, there is only one "e" in judgment, so either they're taking the mickey or they don't do spellchecker. Other oddball curiosities here are Wildlife, Mark B, Boyjazz and MC Lars. The three prizes go to: Try Failing, for their rapidfire riff on Shattered Faith; Boyjazz for their New York disco soundclash that sounds like Sigue Sigue Sputnik crossed with The Normal; and finally Dexter Danger, because if you're gonna have pop punk, you might as well have it done right. --- 6/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### **NO SECOND TROY** - "Narcotic" - Unsigned [Aug 07]

Poppy and simple, with at times very indie friendly guitar riffs, uplifting and powerful vocals and melodies. Emotionally moving ambient sounds and piano, perfectly finding its place in the current phase of trying to reinvent U2. No Second Troy will have no trouble getting to where they want to be. Not my cup of tea, but fans of The Fray will go crazy for this. 5/11. Dennis - [top](#)

#### **NUMBER ONE FAN** - Pat's Records

If these guys are good looking, they'll have the tweenirati swooning in their low riders. MTV will be playing the cigarette lighter ballads on repeat. TRL fans delight! In fact, I'm pretty sure the lead singer is blonde, twenty-two, the rest fill in the pez dispenser with sickening sweet candy pop. Impossibly cute, sounding so familiar you are sure you've heard them somewhere before. And you think possibly, could it be the second coming of Train? Quick! Could someone please call the music supervisor for The O.C.? --- Honey Thunder 4/11 [top](#)

#### **NURAL** "The Weight Of The World" - Hopeless Records [Sept 2005]

Buy this record or some kid dies. Not to be too dramatic, but that's almost literally the case when you're dealing with Hopeless and /or Sub City records. They are basically a music charity that works to prevent teen suicide, and so one can only feel shamefully guilty when reviewing one of their releases. Treading lightly, then, Nural is a rock band from the meth-amphetamine banlieu north of Los Angeles made up of some precocious teens. When did teens suddenly figure out how to sound like world traveled veterans? The band I was in had a hard time affording guitar strings and thought tuning up was for pussies. Nural are a totally pro and polished rock outfit. Nural sound like if you took one of the myriad bands out there who disgracefully try to throw some "punk" touches over their rock sound to try and milk both audiences - but then jettisoned all the punk. This might not actually appeal to the Warped Tour kids. It's stepping over the hybrid sound and trying for something cleaner. Nural add some positive changes to a well-worn sound by frequently using violins and cellos to underscore the emotional depth of the music. This band might be the anti-Avenged Sevenfold. They all thank Jesus on the liner notes and throw props to their beautiful sisters. At the very least, they sound like cool guys to be friends with (and those beautiful sisters!) Middle third of the album has 2 ballads in a row, and they both make you think this band's real passion is for music like Def Leppard, not Dillinger Escape Plan (as they say in the press kit). Nural should be opening up for bands like Armor For Sleep, they're ready for the next step. I would say Nural are like Finch but without the screamy parts. They're striving for the big anthemic, eyes-closed arena sound, and if kids can accept that not everyone has to have punk roots to be cool, Nural will be welcomed with open arms. --- Vermin 6/11 [top](#)

## **O** [top](#)

#### **THE OBSOLETES** "Is This Progress?" - 145 Records

From the windup chords on the very first track, The Obsoletes mark out the terrain they will be covering: the Americana outsider rock of Tom Petty and later Replacements. This rock 'n' roll trio from Wisconsin uses a retro lo-fi trap kit and a gurgling organ to invoke the spirits of bar band greats from the past. "Wish It Never Came" sounds like a lost Tom Petty song right down to the golden guitar solo which restates the melody and grabs you by your ponytail, shaking you, dig it, damn it. The drums are bright and set back in the mix, mostly the snapping snare (and probably a tambourine on the high hat) come through, giving everything a lot of energy. There's a good feel to the songs, like they're well worn and broken in, and I wouldn't be surprised to learn this was recorded live with vocal and guitar overdubs. This works because they harken back to the era when bands proved their mettle on the indy stage circuit and word of mouth got them noticed. "Sad State Of Affairs" you can imagine blasting at you from some tiny stage in a smoky bar in Minneapolis. Maybe Paul Westerberg would get up in the middle of the song and check his pockets, thinking The Obsoletes robbed him of his signature trash rock 'n' roll sound. When the songs are more honest (not so faux honkytonk), they rock. The middle of this album is kind of a stylistic swamp. Songs 5 -9 don't come close to reaching the opening promise of the first four songs because they feel phony. "In the style of" instead of legit rock. Things get back on track on #10, but it still makes you wonder what they were thinking. At times The Obs carry on a gleeful melody that echoes early Costello and Joe Jackson but with American guitars, and these moments are the ones that make them sound so refreshing. They close with the melancholy "The Town That You Grew Up In" which is their version of "Here Comes A Regular," and it's followed by the raucous "920 Blues" as a hidden nugget. --- Paul Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **OCS** - "3 & 4" - Narnack Records [Oct 2005]

This is a difficult record to sit through. I cant imagine ever being in the mood to listen to 31 songs of the same tired drawl over and over again. Although maybe it has to do moreso with the recording than the songs themselves. The sonic quality of the record is horrible, which is fine. The music is simple and stripped down and doesn't need much more than a crappy bedroom recording. It fits the feel of the songs very well. Most of the tracks are primarily a single guitar and vocals backed by very minimal drums. Here and there other elements pop into play and give the songs a bit more flavor, but overall something is lacking. The vocals are recorded in such a way that leaves me disinterested. They drown in effects and lose their character on almost every song. The guitars and drums are also usually recorded in a similar fashion. On some tracks I think it works really well, I just get lost in this record because each song has the same feel. Tired, lazy, bored...occasional fresh moments pop up in just about every song, but they are just moments, not enough to carry the whole song. I like how the record as a whole feels very personal, very intimate (certainly aided by the recording quality) but there's nothing engaging about these songs. ---Brad Amorosino 3/11 [top](#)

#### **OFER** "Short Story Long" - Big Wheel Recreation

This debut LP from the young singer/songwriter Ofer Moses is a master class in the art of writing fetchingly hooky pop songs that display a tremendous ear for melody and an innate sense of structure. Ofer takes the vocal alchemy of Elliott Smith and adds a neo-psyche pastiche that takes colors from artists like The Church and Jon Brion. With the exception of the Jim Croce tune "Time In A Bottle," Ofer displays an originality and creativity that makes him his own unique talent and not a performer in the style of someone else. I would rather that cover was saved for live shows, instead of reducing this album to a short 9 originals. Ofer is a master at using his own voice as a counter melody and layering in multiple trackings that turn and twist the song into unexpected corners. This album is by turns bright and warm, an enveloping sense of beauty and affirmation sweeps throughout it. Ofer has no bone to pick with the world and is not jumping on anyone's bandwagon. Free from pretense and fealty to musical trends, Ofer is unfettered and allowed to play a honeyed acoustic number like "Bittersweet Fate" and wrap its chorus in three or four different harmonies. Dare I say it, but Ofer has learned a thing or two from Lennon/McCartney on how to keep pop interesting. "Devils Winning Hand" earns the accolade Beatles-esque as recognition of the sophisticated song structure and the melding of a "Across The Universe" Lennon-esque vocal with a very McCartney-ian orchestral coloration that recalls the splendor of the Sgt Pepper era. Tremendously gifted, his ear finely attuned to the demands of a melody that enlivens as it seduces, Ofer's debut is stunning. --- 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### **OH NO NOT STEREO** - "Hollywood, California" EP - Takeover Records [April 07]

Fewer moving parts equal less drama, equals happy band. That must be the motto of all two-piece bands out there. Sky and Myk rock an uptempo style that fits in with Rock Kills Kid and Spitalfield, and lots of other bands that know how to stop and

start, how to blast a power chord, and still want to make pop music. The singer reminds me of Jamie Woolford of The Stereo, some of the guitar parts are big and fuzzy and drench everything else, as if they've been digging Death From Above 1979. This EP sounds more like a demo reel, of what they're capable of doing, not a proper album or even genre. The final song, "Every Link In The Chain" has some Cheap Trick aspirations (so it's the best song), but they've got some Yellow Card-isms in "Thirty Two" and other influences as described above. Some of these songs, I'd be interested in hearing an LP based around. Others are a waste of time. I've got to say "gimme some of what you're smoking" to their bio, which mentions fans of Muse, Foo Fighters, QOTSA and Refused as being onto this sound. What the fuck, not even close. I guess it's all good to list a bunch of bands you like in your bio, but it usually blows up in your face when you lay out a whole bunch of lofty bands that you're supposed to sound like, and then you have nothing in common. Anyway, as with all 2 piece bands, the live show usually compensates for the sparse sound, and maybe ONNS really rock it out live. This is also an EP, which means these are probably some throwaway songs and a good song or two that will be on the LP. I would like to hear that LP because this isn't that much to go on, it's not that great, not that bad. ---Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

#### OLD SKARS & UPSTARTS 2 - (Disaster Records 2004)

Somehow this one glided across my desk only recently, even though it's listed as a 2004 release. Comps are a real bitch to review because many times the tracks don't form a cohesive whole and have to be dissected individually. With 27 tracks I will attempt to stick to the ones worth mentioning for either high or low quality. This particular compilation was amassed by Duane Peters (U.S. Bombs, The/Die Hunns) and is meant to be a sampling of the best of the older roots punk sounding bands and their newer counterparts (Old Skars and Upstarts. Get it?). There are some interesting gems on here but for the most part I wouldn't bother. Most of the bands here are just coloring by numbers and mining the same tired piece of terrain that Mr. Peters's bands are known for. There are some notable exceptions. **The Briefs** have the honor (?) of book ending the compilation and the first track is much more goofy and Toy Dolls spastic than most of their other material, which probably explains why it ended up here instead of on their record. **The Revolvers** "No Clash Reunion" is a well done homage to the root bands of punk, with stylistic nods to the Clash, The Jam, and others. **Butcher's Bill** offered a stand out track "This Party Sucks" which is gee-tar rockin' and funny as hell. **Deep Eynde's** track "Dead Alive" was an unusual inclusion which strayed outside of the compilation's coloring lines and was like a Goth era Damned song but not as good, and came across a bit more like a Deadbolt novelty song. **The Street Dogs** "Lock and Loaded" was good and solid of course but not as interesting as some of the stuff on their new record "Savin Hill". And surprise surprise, **The Hunns** cover of the Undertones "Got Your Number" was a good listen, as much for Scottish punk nostalgia as for the impressive vocal contributions of Corey Parks (ex-Nashville Pussy). That chick just rocks and the contrast between her tough yet feminine sound and the grumbling pirate growls of Peters works well. Didn't hurt that the guitars and drums were spot on too. **The New Strange** track "Standing and Talking" is unlike anything else on the comp, and was interesting with a distinctly college radio pop sound that makes the cut. **Throwrag's** "Hang Up" was one of the best tracks on the record. Not surprising since it's also one of the strongest songs on their new record as well. **The Hollowpoints** track sounded like a politically obsessed Descendents mixed with early Bad Religion and that's not exactly a bad thing if it's what you're going for. **Sit n' Spin's** addition to the compilation "Dance the Demons Out" was a little ray of bubble gum pop sunshine in the otherwise testosterone laden backdrop and was really good, although a little repetitive. Fastest Drum Track Award goes hands down to **Union 13**, which have again captured the high energy of earlier punk band contemporaries like Pennywise or NOFX. "Prime Time Reality" by **Knuckle Head** was a great song that careens all over the road at 90mph while throwing broken guitar picks and beer bottles out the window. Good stuff. And now (shudder) , the most horrible piece of shit I've ever had the displeasure of sitting through...you guessed it...the other Duane Peters track. He and Pascal Briggs crafted what sounds like a cross between a G.G. Allin spoken word track and an indigestible piece of Meatloaf's "Bat Out of Hell" Broadway style rock opera. There's nothing deep about it unless you're measuring how many feet the pretentious bullshit has piled up. You almost have to hear it to believe it but it's not something I'd recommend on a full stomach. I'll just leave it at that. **D.I.'s** "O.C.'s Burning" is definitely just another D.I. song about Orange County. **The Fuckos'** do a number called "The Backslide Dance" that's pretty amazing with cool vocal effects, swinging dynamics and a sinister feel. Again it's mostly the tracks that stray outside the pre-scripted punk rock template that impressed the most. **The Dollarstore Cowboys'** "Hell Bent" is a country R&B number that lopes along dreamily and ain't bad at all neither. Monster Squad gets the 2nd Fastest Drums award for their song "F.T.S." (Fuck The System) and it's a genuine hollering anarcho-punker but nothing you haven't heard before. Mercifully we exit with **The Briefs** "Casey Casum" which sends you off on a note of quality and almost makes you forget what a chore getting through the rest of the mindless punk chaff that came before was. Almost. I tremble to imagine how horrible the rest of the 1,200 demos considered for this album must have been if this was the best they came up with. 4 out of 11 for overall listenability (comps are a pain in the ass to review). ---The Swede. [top](#)

**OLD SKARS AND UPSTARTS 505** - Disaster Records [Oct 2005] Mad Dog Duane Peters is back with his 5th batch of old and new punk bands. We don't play the age card here, so allow me to just list my favorites off this record: Epoxies, River Boat Gamblers (a fantastic Dallas punk band with a gritty, drunk sound), The Skulls (one of LA's first punk bands), New York's Dead Boys wannabes the Black Halos, and Scandinavian gay porn death metal purveyors Turbonegro covering David Bowie's seminal "Suffragette City." Like a good cover, it sounds familiar and totally alien at the same time. 30 songs, some good new acts and it's cheap! ---Sid Arthur 5/11 [top](#)

#### THE ONE AM RADIO - "This Too Will Pass" - [April 07]

13 tracks of enjoyable songs. Ranging from beat driven, multiple vocal tracked songs with a lot of featured instruments to songs that can be related to Death Cab for Cutie, Jets to Brazil, Thanksgiving, Air, and Owen. Some songs sound completely original and tough to relate to another band, and others like number 4 "Mercury" sound like it belongs in a skate video. Track 6 "Our Fall Apart" alike some other songs has electronic drums, but this tempo is a bit faster and the eerie vocals don't match up well. "Fires" is by far the most dynamically loud and intense song on the album, and it had little lyrics, the whole first half of the song is just instrumental with a vocal melody of "aaahhhh" until it stops, words form, and drums pound. 7/11---Dennis. [top](#)

#### ONEIDA "Nice/Splittin' Peaches" - Ace Fu Records 2004

I am not hip enough to understand Oneida. These 4 songs make their mystique only more impenetrable. The reason I like some of it is because it is so different and moving in the opposite direction of the current music stream. Oneida make self-conscious songs that deliberately grate on the listener, embracing the unconventional. First track "Summerland" feels like an acid 60s endurance test. The psych-freak breaks are pretty crafty but the lyrics and the way the music marches in cadence and tone with the lyric is annoying as fuck. Now that "Summerland" is out of the way, Oneida never veer near that sonic terrain again. "Inside My Head" is a noisy collage of feedback and frequency loops. This song is pretty great in parts, too. The overall gestalt of the music is psychedelic feedback with a soup of ideas swirling around beneath the chorus. I think Oneida would be a fun band to check out because their mood and tone shifts every couple of minutes and the arsenal of analog instruments they use is probably pretty cool. "Song Y" has Eastern guitar/sitar over rudimentary synth beats, pre-808 technology I'd say, like maybe Casio. In it's brief run, "Song Y" delivers a sticky "Tripping Daisy" vibe, before clocking out in under 2 minutes. The EP closer is the 14 minute jam-anthem "Hakuna Matata." Starting with a feedback loop as a drum track, backward vocal bits drift in like ghosts. The monotone loop becomes meditative after awhile. The feedback is manipulated to give different undertones, but if you make it through the whole 14 minutes, it might reset your mental clock. This is arty, hipster experimentalism for the sake of hipsterism. For fans of Red Krayola, Los Super Elegantes, Negativland. --- Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

#### ONE TIME ANGELS Sound Of A Restless City - Adeline Records

The band's name called to mind hockey, as in "one-timer from the blue line" but I don't think that's what they wanted. This band isn't Slapshot. They're a sincere punk band in the Jawbreaker / Lifetime / Tiltwheel mold. This sounds kinda like something that would've been on "Bivoac." It's guitar-friendly, medium tempo, gravelly vocals, melodic punk with Hammond organ and syths. The tunes have great structure, solid choruses, good energy. Singer Doug Sangalang belts out literate and high-minded lyrics. This is what good music sounded like before the current wave of weak punk took over. The OTA guitar leads would make Bob Mould proud, and the songwriting shows an attention to providing tunes that transcend the "punk" genre. --Paul [top](#)

#### THE ONLY CHILDREN "Change Of Living" - Glurp Records

This band is the new face of the demised emo outfit The Anniversary. Before you skip along to the next review, hear this: The Only Children is not emo. Why they copped to being in that band is a mystery, because the new sound is completely different. Every musician at some point flirts with roots Americana, whether it's U2's disastrous efforts or Costello's somewhat better results, it's cliché?...usually. This is country rock played through the indie world's amps. Not a true and quileless rendition of a faded scene (see The Idaho Falls), these guys reinterpret the past greatness of country tinged rock, citing Neil Young and Beggars Banquet-era Stones on their bio. That's reaching for the stars, admittedly, but TOC will earn your grudging respect if you give them a chance. On "Before It Fades" they combine the shut eyed, whispered intensity of modern altrock with the

tremulous bent notes of a Telecaster through a classic tube amp. It's not pure country rock, because most of that is frankly, boring, or at least requires an unhealthy obsession with nostalgia. TOC's infatuation with American folk rock is clearly heard on album opener, "Sky Begins To Storm." The acoustic ballad about driving to New York with a switchblade, and the line "don't think twice boy if you're gonna kill a man..." places it firmly in the outlaw country tradition. Singer Josh Berwanger is joined by Heidi-Lynne Gluck on harmony in a rousing duet. Most of the songs are smart interpretations of an Americana comprised of equal parts Tom Petty, Cracker, and Whiskeytown. TOC don't forget the "rock" in "country rock," as the busy guitars in "Change Of Living" forcefully show. My guess is that while playing in the Anniversary, Josh, Janko and James (the survivors) looked around and realized they were bored. Or someone dropped a copy of Neil Young's "Decade" on them, and they were never the same. They've seen the light, just like Jake & Elwood, and they are saved! --- 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### THE OPEN "The Silent Hours" - Loog Records

I need to write myself a reminder note that reads, "no matter how many times bands namedrop Echo & The Bunnymen, Gang Of Four, and Joy Division, they will never, ever sound as good as the originals." I had big hopes for Liverpool's The Open, since they descend from that foetid wellspring that gave the world The Bunnymen, Teardrop Explodes, and even Elvis Costello. Oh yeah, and The Beatles. The Open have moments of moody grey grandeur that some have likened to the Verve and even the Bunnymen, but unless you're talking about the most recent Bunnymen fluff and the airy solo work of the Verve's Richard Ashcroft, the comparisons don't fit. There are some cool guitar shadings on "Close My Eyes" that speak of the wintery grey light of Liverpool, but the singer's anxious and soaring voice recalls Coldplay. Coldplay get on my nerves because that singer thinks he's so precious. In all the Bunnymen reimaginings, no one seems to get the tribal rhythmic machine that was Pete Dinklage. He beat a strange lost at sea tattoo over Mac's croons. The Open have a straightforward drumming style. Even when the guitarist is laying out some angular lines like on "Bring Me Down," the 1-2, 1-2 beats feel mainstream, not bubbling from the underground well. Still, the scousers adroitly sketch murmuring tunes, like "Lost," which threatens to become an anthem before returning to strictly Coldplay territory. Oddly, there's an American band called Cerulean that sounds almost exactly like these guys, but because they're not from the UK the press won't mention them. This record is soft and somewhat lacklustre until the last three tracks. These dodge the Coldplay vocals in favor of more originality. I think this record will grow on repeated listens, but I don't know if I have the time to devote to it.---7/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### ORBIT SERVICE - "Songs of Eta Carinae" - Bela-Lactam Ring Records [May 2006]

Orbit Service has been compared to Pink Floyd ad nauseum by other reviewers, and while there's an element of truth to the comparison, one listen to "Songs of Eta Carinae" will convince listeners that this is more of a compliment than an indictment. Think early Roger Waters Pink Floyd and be reminded that unlike most of their fluffy flower power peers, Pink Floyd realized that not every trip was a good one and they weren't afraid to channel some of the darker energies and the mental and emotional fallout of the psychedelic era. Orbit Service is similar in that respect and while they may mine some of the same sonic landscapes of their predecessor, the content and material is all their own and done with originality and feeling. To dismiss them out of hand as a dark psychedelic band would be a gross mistake and one your ears will suffer for. This is not your run of the mill fluffy pop and demands a little more attention than most current music littering the field today but that's not a bad thing if you truly value musical experimentation and bands that push the envelope and revisit under appreciated pockets of sound. Kudos to Bela-Lactam Ring Records for putting this out and again taking roads less traveled. 8 out of 11. ---The Swede [top](#)

#### THE ORDINARY BOYS - "How to Get Everything You Ever Wanted In Ten Easy Steps" - Polydor [April 07]

Over here, no one knows them. In the UK, they're part celebrities, part cult band, part poseurs to be laughed at. Singer Sam Preston bizarrely agreed to be on Celebrity Big Brother and earned legions of admirers and detractors for his droll comments AND for running off with one of the brazen female contestants. Add to this, the fact that Preston & Co. have a love affair with the mod sounds of Ocean Colour Scene and The Jam, and you've got a band destined to grow a smaller and more dedicated fan base with each album. On this, their 3rd LP, they seem to have found their feet again after the pratfall of "Brassbound." Preston has smoothed his vocals even more, positively crooning on the single "Lonely At The Top." Back comes the bounce and energy of the first record with the jubilant "The Great Big Rip Off." This album is decidedly a pop record, but it's a fun pop record. The horns that appear are more soul-inflected and punch up the choruses, leaving guitars to languish on the sidelines. There are even electronic drums at times. It's clear they are not adhering to any Mod purity, just having a ball. Two warning flags, however. 1) is the unabashed love song to his new wife, "I Luv You" and the other is the duet with London hip hopper Lady Sovereign, "Nine2Five." It reminds me of how The Specials took reggae and fused it to punk, this mixing of genres. I don't mind the latter, and the former is a sweet love song. Come on! You can have one sweet love song. The one thing that maybe separates Preston from some of his idols like Paul Weller and Morrissey is he never seems to be speaking from the sidelines, or venting anger and frustration. He seems to be a well-adjusted, happy guy. Maybe that's why these are pop songs instead of rock songs. There's no alienation, no anger, except maybe on "Who's That Boy." If they had asked, I would have requested more guitars and anger, less glossy pop. That aside, I still love this band, and it's a far sight better than their last record. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### THE ORDINARY BOYS "Over The Counter Culture" - B-Unique Records

The OB's are fucking fantastic. You have been waiting for a band to come and cut through the endless whingings about girlfriends who dumped them and speak about something looming with more menace, the possibility that your future will be filled with monotonous work and you'll only feel alive on the weekends. You've wanted a new with songs that stick in your mind like earworms, a band that has a shot at getting up in the top echelon of your favorite bands list. The wait is over, and Worthing, England's The Ordinary Boys are your new favourite band. I think their sound is going to be "too English" for most American ears, so don't expect the over-the-pond crossover success of Franz Ferdinand, but for those of us attuned to the aural pleasures of the amazing tradition of working class British music, The Ordinary Boys are a godsend. You can draw their family tree of influences, starting with the Small Faces and running through The Kinks, The Specials, The Jam, The Smiths, Billy Bragg and Libertines. The OB's cover the raucous, racially integrated and fisticuff ready band The Specials' indictment of high society aspirers, "Little Bitch." It's all forward energy. The Specials had their hands full with rioting skinheads incensed at an interracial band, and it's right and just for The OB's to reiterate this solidarity. Now that they've shown you why The Specials should still matter in 2004, they offer a bag of originals that might blow away some of your favorites. "Week In Week Out" is the new anthem for working slob who will never be rich or famous or have their own brilliant website (ahem). Working stiff blues is the elephant in the room that no one on MTV will mention. "Talk Talk Talk" has the shout out loud chorus, "How's the weather? Grey and boring! It's back to work, on Monday morning!" For the 99.9% of people who work, this song is the tiny capsule of freedom you wash down with a pint, forgetting about the drudgery ahead. "Maybe Someday" just rips in fast and delivers the magical blast of agit-pop genius in under 3 minutes. It sounds like Billy Bragg fronting an outtake from The Jam's "All Mod Cons" sessions. In more weekend worship, "Seaside," has a wonderfully catchy melody, "Not gonna wait, for the weekend, to step outside, hurry up hurry up, put your shoes on, the seaside needs us, more than ever." It's the thrill of the first Oasis record, when a band of blokes put together songs that brilliant dealt with the average person's world. The OB's are brilliant, anthemic, explosive, and are surely the next great English band. --- Leeds 10/11 [top](#)

#### ORILLIA OPRY - "Pandion Hallaetus" - Ships At Night [Sept 06]

Seriously starting to get a little superstitious about this record because I've tried no fewer than 3 previous times to review this. Attempt #4, and I'm keeping it simple: rootsy Americana with some alt-country flavors. I keep coming back to "Poison House" and its sweet chorus and guitars that sound like a song you want on when you're racing up the coast in a convertible. Granted, that's not "simple," sorry, but songs that can take your brain away and give you a feeling of doing something else entirely are worthwhile. If this song reminds me of feeling carefree and easy and jamming up to Santa Barbara for a weekend of sex and drugs, so what? At this point, OO want nothing to do with me, so let me say they also remind me of the excellent Texas band Centro-Matic. The twin vocals on "It's Rare" have both Daniel Noble and Emma Baxter sighing out some emotive angst, just letting their pain or beauty or sadness meld with the dying autumn sky. The acoustic guitar should be outlawed in many states, including the "state" of Montreal, where OO hail from, but OO's usage merits a special pardon. This album has great moments of country-death sadness and jangly indie rock breeziness in equal measures. OO is also blessed with a capable and interesting singer who weaves his voice around their tales of longing. --- Prof. Lionel Mutton, PhD. 8/11 [top](#)

#### OSLO- s/t - some label [Oct 07]

Oslo plays glossy and moody pop for fans of grandiose midtempo outfits like South and Doves. The singer sings with a lot more sneer and attitude on this album than on the EP I heard awhile back. With the effects-laden guitars and sneered chorus on "The Rise And Fall of Love And Hate" Oslo approach a gloomy and electrifying sound. Think Cooper Temple Clause without the electronics. Oslo still has a fairly traditional approach and these songs unspool without a whole lot of surprises. The singer may channel Liam Gallagher on occasion (Crowded Room) but in general his voice is much too honey-coated. If only this album had



a few more moments of light busting through the gloomy clouds, it would really help to give these grey sounds some contrast, like a moment when the guitar is unchained and rips out a blinder, or the chorus builds into a cathartic explosion - but it doesn't happen. The guitarist does use an arsenal of pedals and works his socks off. Tempos are all similar, it's all well-crafted modern rock, but nothing really grabs you. I feel like these songs are a bit too similar, only set apart by a bass intro or a lofty female backing vox (A Darker Shade). --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **OSLO** "advance copy EP" - FKE Records, 2005

The second wave has begun. Interpol and Cooper Temple and British Sea Power have staked out claims to the moody atmospherics of British rock circa 1984, audiences again are embracing rainy day music, and we can expect a new crop of exciting bands following in the tradition of Echo & The Bunnymen, Joy Division, The Chameleons, etc. Oslo have a searching, personal singing style that departs from sounding pretty and musical and relies more on delivering an emotion or a dark thought. He's not disappearing up his own bottom a la Thom Yorke or intentionally trying to atonally imitate Ian Curtis. There is some variations in style here. Some songs bear closer resemblance to the pre-success Verve and others to current bands like The Open and Hope of The States. If you're not a Britrock fan, stay away. This is for all those kids in creepers and grey cloaks, hoping for the sun to stop shining. On this 8 song "ep" Oslo take you through windswept terrain where guitars echo off shallow bays and the bass becomes a mesmerizing pulse. They venture from soaked guitar pedals to stripped down rock drumming, landing between the stylized fashion of Interpol and the more aggressive, electronically abetted darker sound of Cooper Temple Clause. There is good reason to be excited about this band. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **OTASCO** - "Hubris" - Apocalypse the Apocalypse [Oct 07]

Not sure if the cover intentionally parodies Don McLean's "American Pie," but it scared me none the less. Otasco are not taking anyone's Chevy to any levees, so you're safe. Instead, this is a rock 'n' roll hodgepodge of Steve Malkmus and Mudhoney. Singer Dag Gooch gets personal and ruminates in a laconic stoner drawl on some songs and then howls like he's whipping his dogs (Sorry We Left You) on others. The band keeps up with a revved up version of a barroom rock classics band, but then suddenly they turn 180 and deliver an electro beat song with synths (In Sickness Or In Hell). Problem is, this "goof" song is as good or better than their rock songs which are ostensibly more serious. A bit confused, and the compositions are not at the same quality level, but some interesting stuff in here anyway. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **THE OTHERS** s/t - Vertigo Records [March 2005]

London is burning with passion now. Forget about the days when The Clash could claim boredom was setting the town ablaze, these days it's all guerrilla gigging and text messaging 200 fans a day to keep a scene under a heady froth of steam. The frontman for this grimy attack-dog rock band is Dominic Masters, a man who candidly talked about smoking crack three times a week and living with a transsexual in his first major interview. You see, this is The Others, as in, not for the masses, the squares, the normals, the rich kids, the beautiful kids, and the majority of the pop world. Dom is also incredibly open to his throngs of friends, which all "fans" of the band are. He invites them back to his flat after gigs, and acts as combination den mother and big brother to the many young kids who call themselves the 853. "I'm not looking for a leader, I hate the trendy crowd, a rag-bag collective, I like that way for now..." (Community 853). Musically, the debut album is chock full of calls to arms that start with a late 70s punk feel and apply Iggy Pop melodious jeering over songs that sound perfect being screamed by a crowd in a subway car. Equally as brash and unfamiliar on the ears as the Sex Pistols' debut was in 1977, The Others are making their own rules as they go along. On "Almanac," three chords almost never sounded so good. Dom sings with real passion and love for what he's doing. The songs have hooks in great supply, some moments sounding like the great first Pretenders album mixed with the toe-tapping effrontery of Sex Pistols. From the get-go, Dom has championed the working class people and has set fire to the establishment, wherever it rears its head. "Lackey" and "This Is For The Poor" are the bold, brash, class-war anthems that youth need to have injected into their DNA. He might not be pretty like the Franz boys, and he can't caress a tune like Kaiser Chiefs, but his voice is as real as it is raw. The men behind Dom are also a motley crew, one with wild Robert Smith hair and another approaching baldness. You feel you can trust Dom, he's never going to sell you out and appear in a McDonald's commercial or license his songs to Disney. Is it possible for a band to divert a generation from soulless jobs in sales while being blatantly unphotogenic, unapologetic, and unsympathetic to the soul-sucking music industry? Let's hope. ---Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **JEFF OTT** "Weapons of Mass Destruction And The Real War On Terror" (book) - Sub City [Nov 2005]

Jeff Ott is the grizzled Bay Area survivor of punk rock, alcoholism, drug addiction, and shitty parenting. He also used to play in Fifteen and Crimpshrine, and was one of the first to popularize (albeit accidentally) the street punk ethos. This book is a passionate scream against most of the prevailing ills of our day delivered exactly those crusty Berkeley punks did it so many years ago. And as such, it is mainly a book for the already converted, as the arguments and narrative style are not designed to calmly lead one to a new way of thinking, but rather, to provide bullet points for the true believers to go out and wage intellectual war against the the non-believers. The collection of essays are spokes in Ott's general wheel of grievances, and he tackles police brutality, homelessness, terrorism, violence against women, sexual abuse, and abortion with equal parts witty conversation and angry diatribe. This book has the freshness and zeal of an early punk 'zine, compleat with goofy spellings and grammar that would stop Mrs Crabtree in her tracks. Some of the politics he espouses are of the Ellen James-ian variety of dramatic "solutions" to intractable problems that are intentionally provocative. Some of Ott's arguments are plain old common sense. Who can realistically argue against condom use? Only the blinkered religious right, and when Ott cites statistics like 15,000 children die of starvation daily, 1 million teen pregnancies per year in the US, and so on, it's a simple appeal on behalf of humanity. Yet the scholarship is a bit sloppy. When he says 8,500 AIDS deaths per day, and then 1,500 AIDS deaths of children per day, are we to add the numbers and get 10,000 deaths, or are the 1,500 part of the 8,500 already cited? The argument is still valid and pointed, of course, but it lessens the impact to more of a barroom debate than an academic one, because if you use these figures in a debate with someone and have to say "it's either 8,500 or 10,000 per day" it will sound like YOU are making it up. Aside from the major bum-out of having Scott Peteresen's mug on the cover of this book, the other main issue that clouds Ott's educational efforts is the inclusion of Debi Zuvar's story. Zuvar shot and killed her boyfriend and is serving 21 years in prison. Zuvar's and Ott's version of events is that Zuvar had been fearing for her life, had been beaten and threatened many times by this dirtbag, and when she shot him it was either him or her. The crime of spousal abuse is so real it's a national/human disgrace. Whether Zuvar had other options remains to be debated. The case presented in this book just doesn't convince me, and maybe there are some people that just need killin' but that is one slippery-ass slope that we should not go down, or else this country will be very thinly populated at the bottom of the hill. At any rate, most of Ott's views are in line with being an enlightened socially conscious person. Many tables and statistics are provided to bolster his case, but some of them are more than a little unscientific and overly eager to prove causalities where tenuous connections exist, like in the famous graph of global warming being caused by a decrease in the number of pirates since 1800, as preached by followers of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Ultimately it is Ott's own life that provides the lens to view this reality: the years he spent on the streets or in the punk rock scene and the victimizations he saw has made this underbelly painfully obvious. For most of us, the world that Ott wants to change is kept hidden from us, and we merely shrug our shoulders when we hear of another police homicide or a wife beating or a teenage runaway winding up dead on the streets. Jeff Ott never gave up on those victims, and this book might make you care enough to do something about it yourself. ---Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **JEFF OTT** Will Work For Diapers - Sub City Records

Okay, so Jeff Ott was in Crimpshrine and Fifteen. These bands would make you think that a release from this guy would fall more into the punktype vein. Don't think this anymore. If you are into political folk/rock, then there is a lot to be said about this cd. It sounds good: well-recorded guitar and singing with a tinge of the vocal push that makes punk punk. Ott has a lot to say about a lot of issues, and he doesn't hold back on this double disc set. He touches on issues from being overcharged by a greedy landlord to how our actions worldwide led to Sept. 11th. I disagree with a lot of what he says, but I think that is a lot of his point: to get a dialogue going, and he does that admirably. This cd is not for everyone, and quite honestly, it's not for me, but if you are a fan of better living through folk/rock, this is a cd for you. - Theominster Crowley 4/11 [top](#)

#### **OUIJA RADIO** - "Oh No.. Yes! Yes!" - Crustacean Records [Nov 06]

Ouija Radio is a female fronted power trio from Minneapolis that cranks out a quirky casserole of edgy guitar parts, pounding drums, bleep bleeping keyboard chaos, and coolly varied vocals. They keep it going strong with lots of interesting switches, changes, stalls, and just sheer variety in their arrangements to consistently maintain your attention. Singer Christy Hunt has a wide range and draws from a mysteriously deep well of influences. You're just as likely to hear traces of Heart, Siouxsie Sioux, or Missing Persons as you are Perry Farrell or Babes in Toyland, and then just when you think you've got her pegged, she'll bust out a sweet country fried lilt, cabaret style lament, or breathy ingenue whisper. Good stuff to be sure and hard to file in any one pigeonhole due to its range and diversity. There's a great version of "Stormy Monday" that was pretty mind blowing, the only

cover on the release. While still keeping a reliably hard rocking attitude, they aggressively trample around so many different styles they're bound to step on at least one that you like. The production values are excellent and the tracks are strewn with a wide variety of different tones and instrumentations. One of the better releases I've heard lately and highly impressive for its scope and scale. 9 on a scale of 1-11. The Swede [top](#)

#### **OVER IT**, "Silverstrand" - Lobster Records [April 05]

Lobster Records has a knack for digging up spic-and-span pop punk, extra clean cut for mass consumption. In 2001 the Santa Barbara label released Yellowcard's debut album, a band that is now on Capitol Records and has had frequent rotation on MTV. Over It has all the same qualities that placed Yellowcard in the mainstream eye. The vocals are squeaky clean; even the more aggressive and strained melodies seem calculated and void of any intimate flare. The lyrics are bland and malleable, a characteristic particularly appropriate for acceptance in mainstream pop punk. The guitars are full and thick and consist mostly of simple chord progressions with basic catchy leads thrown on top. The rhythm section does its job of locking down the beat and thickening things up. In general, the bass and drums don't stray much from their traditional role. The album as a whole is certainly well done, the recording sounds great, the songs are punchy and catchy, there is just an overall lack of flavor. Here and there, there are some particularly well-crafted moments. In "Shine" the end of the song falls apart, leaving only vocals, an acoustic guitar and a blown out distorted drum track panned hard to the left. "Take a Look Inside" features some interesting vocal work during the pre-chorus. The vocals are expressed in a purposefully rushed kind of gasp that sounds urgent and disgusted. Those kind of experimental moments can really shape and add color to a record. I wish there were more of them. ---Brad Amorosino 6/11 [top](#)

#### **OWLS** - Jade Tree

The Kinsella brothers return. Tim and Mike were responsible for Cap'n Jazz and Joan of Arc. Those bands aren't everyone's cup of worms, but for those of you who need a little art rock angst thrown in with your cerebral tunes, you could trust Team Kinsella to deliver. The new project, Owls, bears only a passing resemblance to the other bands. Tim's singing has gotten almost friendly, in its directness and willingness to challenge someone into singing along. The music is decidedly eclectic and fond of off-beat drumming and loping bass lines. Owls have made songs that structurally resemble late-model Fugazi in their ability to play jazzy guitar patterns and intricate rhythms. It's a lazy calm that lets Tim's vocals wind up and down while the songs accompany him on a weird journey. This is a unique sound that feels poetic and beat, at the same time. One of my favorite albums of all last year. --Will [top](#)

#### **OZMA** Spending Time On The Borderline - Kung Fu Records

Ozma's namesake is Princess Ozma, of Oz, from the Frank L. Baum books. Somehow I think it's significant that a band takes their name from a fairytale princess. How? I don't know. It's part and parcel of their fanbase's demographic, though, slightly bookish, a little romantic, and the type that might spend a little too much time pissing about the Internet instead of digging into the real world. Ozma is also the favorite band of Weezer's Rivers Cuomo, which is not exactly news. Until this record I thought that this mutual adoration was due to frontman Ryan Sleg (or is the frontman Daniel Brummel?) having an eerily similar voice to Rivers'. How could you not like someone who sounds like you? It's now become impossible to distinguish the two bands. This new record sounds like a hybrid of the first two Weezer albums - in the best possible sense. It would be foolish for Weezer to go back to their original sound and many would call it pandering. For Ozma, it means their sound, which up until this point has been overly burdened with cuteness and in-joke blandness, has now been driven out into the light by producer Chris Fudurich, who knows the difference between a hook and a sinker. Maybe it's his direction that made the band stay focused in the studio. Who knows. The point is that this is a really good record and I actually listen to this thing a lot. I have the first Ozma record but it never really did anything for me and their "Double Donkey" ep or whatever it's called to my ears was just some malarkey. Maybe one factor of the new disc's appeal is the hot-fingered fretwork of guitarist Jose Galvez. He's not throwing out 1/32 notes, he just know that when you're going to bust out a guitar lick, make it count. Check out the peeling notes of "Come Home Andrea." There are some great solos and leads on this. The keys are pushed a little more into the background and the guitars take the center stage and that's exactly what Ozma's been lacking - some guts. Rachel Haden (That Dog) is also on here doing backing vox duties. She guests on so many records it makes you wonder if she's real or maybe just the name of a new Pro Tools plug-in? I saw someone who claimed to be Rachel Haden once, and she was a foxy mama, so maybe she is real. My favorite track on here is "Game Over." Ryan/Daniel's vocals are strong and recall the vocal lines of Weezer's "Say It Ain't So." The title track welcomes the listener back to the familiar Ozma sound of keyboard melodies, but then hotrod guitars and a vocal sneer take over, and mean the band has finally decided to rock. "Bad Dogs" is a choppy riff song with a fun chorus. "Your Name" begins with a great Star Wick subdued keyboard chill, and the hushed vocals are a good mood alternative to the usual gleeful Ozma attack. Many pleasures to behold. "Spending Time" is easily Ozma's best effort to date, at long last. ---Paul Leeds [top](#)

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#### **PABLO** - "Half the Time" - Curb Appeal Records [Dec 06]

Every couple of years those rare albums come along and you dig it the first listen. Then you play it again and enjoy it even more. Before you know it, you're playing the record five times a day - it becomes something you need. You find the lyrics and the emotion speaking as if they were written with you in mind. Half the time is one of those records. Pablo is a family affair - two pairs of brother and a wife, doing something they obviously enjoy, infusing it with just enough angst, passion and verve that it somehow feels fresh in this day and age. With a soulful alt-country feel, it's hard not to think of Ryan Adams, but this being a group effort, that seems like a mistake. Lead singer Paul Shalda's vocals fall nicely between Adams, David Gray and Grant Lee Phillips, without the sentimentality Gray evokes. The disc opens with the Brooklyn crew looking across the river, pondering a life on "Wall St." From then on, there is question after of loss, break ups, and the twenty-something question of "getting out from under my own shadow." The atmosphere is painted with acoustic guitar, piano and organ riffs, plus some harmonica for good measure. The only failing of this record is its brevity. Most of the songs come in around two-and-a-half minutes, making for a thirty-minute record. Hopefully Paul.Shalda and company are locked in a Brooklyn basement readying the next song cycle for '07. Every generation needs a smoky philosopher. I hope this one finds Pablo. ---Nate Fitz 9/11 [top](#)

#### **THE PALE PACIFIC** "Rules Are Predictable" - SideCho Records [Jan 2006]

The Pale Pacific seem to be gaining attention, receiving recent press from Spin Magazine and Rolling Stone. With a vocal styling and general mood that is difficult to separate from Death Cab for Cutie and The Postal Service, The Pale Pacific have a very smooth familiar sound. The only song on this EP that does challenge the Death Cab comparison is the indie-surf tune "Identity Theft." Appropriately titled for a song that sounds oddly unlike the rest of the EP. The song's upbeat surf feel seems out of place with the subdued quality of the rest of the CD. Variety is always appreciated, but in this case it is a bit jarring. The song that sticks the most, in a good way, on this release is the first track entitled 'Sucker Punch.' Following the first track, the rest of EP pales in comparison but is still a solid disc. 'Sucker Punch' has catchy beats and melodies and an overall calming effect. The song is relaxing, not in a boring or tiresome way, in a comforting way. It features bells and electric piano that mimic the vocal melodies and add to the smooth relaxed feel of the song. Eventually, the song swells and shifts to sound like a more straight-forward rock song. The ending has an appropriately bigger sound that provides climax. It's a great song, especially when the melody of the electric piano sits comfortably beneath the vocal melody. The EP is worth the purchase just for this track. Especially for Death Cab fans, who should also check out The Pale Pacific's upcoming album. Their full-length album entitled "Urgency," will feature mixes by Chris Walla of Death Cab. ---6/11 Brad Amorosino. [top](#)

#### **PALE YOUNG GENTLEMEN** - s/t - s/r [Oct 07]

This first song is based off a tango riff and builds into a piano-accented cabaret number. There is a Tiger Lillies theatricality to these songs, and a fey sense of mad English eccentricity. The kooky atmosphere is furthered by mandolin (?) riffing and drums in odd time signatures. PYG seem to be beaming in from another century, although singer Mike Reisenauer's chilly baritone would fit in on any Britpop album. This is an interesting, if very arch, sound that should appeal to those who love their music eccentric. It sounds like the soundtrack to some nutty stage production. The waltzes, tangos and other styles these songs are built from make PYG sound like no one else. --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**THE PANDA BAND** - "This Vital Chapter" - Filter [Nov 06]

The Panda Band is a glorious psychedelic confection of iconoclastic late 60s pop. Lots of jangly melodies and horn sections and circus organs and boys and girls having a ball, and that's just on "Sleepy Little Death-toll Town." The Pandas really have gone to town in the studio, there is a wealth of lush background instrumentation and layer upon layer of intricately plotted vocals. Nothing seems beyond this band: an array of tempo changes in one song while channeling "Pet Sounds" in the midst of a dalliance with The Polyphonic Spree ("Spanish Bride"). Elsewhere the Pandas musically acknowledge a debt to Wings and a McCartney style of guitar playing and instrumentation ("Musical Chairs.") It's not easy, folks, to make grand pop music without becoming grandiose, and the Panda Band navigates these dangerous waters with ease. There is so much going on in each track it warrants headphones, a night in, and something to get you on their wavelength to properly experience it. They're joined on a couple tracks by Katy Steele who does a bang-on impersonation of Kate Bush (intentionally or not), and on those songs the Pandas sound eerily like a duet between Ms Bush and The Arcade Fire. Like many Wings records, though, this one is not chocked full of hits, there are a few lesser birds here. Even with a couple of subpar tunes, this is still an impressive album. --- Leeds 9/11 [top](#)

**THE PAPER CHAMPIONS** s/t, s/r

I like. If you take braid and take away a little of the mathiness and add in a twist of being unafraid to rock, then you have a pretty good start towards understanding the paper champions. These guys harmonize like nobody's business, and I love it. The vocals are almost always moving, sometimes in two lines, sometimes just playing off each other, which adds a great flavor to the unapologetically rocking guitar/bass/drums combo. The lyrics are abstract, which I like, but are a little generic: "I'm scared to death/I feel I'm going under like all the rest" but honestly, this only bugs me when I read them along with the music. This is a self-released ep which is an precursor to an upcoming album which I will be excited for. Check out [www.thepaperchampions.com](http://www.thepaperchampions.com) for more info and some mp3s. - Theominster Crowley 8/11 [top](#)

**PARIS, TEXAS "Like You Like An Arsonist"** - New Line Records

Named after a sobering and depressing Wim Wenders movie where Harry Dean Stanton's schmoe character loses his gal, who runs off to the city to become a peepshow fixture. A bird on their cover gets them extra points, but the truth is they know their way around a 3 minute burst of revved up pop and don't need any gimmies. I don't know where PT will fit in the grand scheme. They're too big and clean to be plugging away in a punk ghetto, but they're neither whisky soaked enough to be considered alongside Razorlight and Jet, nor distorted enough to be lined up with Phantom Planet. Their sound is very 3-D with a lot of space between the highs and lows. The singer's anxious cadence pumps energy into the lyrics (like could've-beens Wax), and the music is spread out with chugging guitars, handclaps and leads as warm as 90s rock. These Wisconsinites carry songs bigger than any sidestage slot and hold ambitions for the big tent. The title track builds as surely as any climber from Jet. It's formula ascends to where you expect a screamed "Yeah!" on the chorus followed by an Angus Young solo. PT back off from those excesses but still manage to convey a rock 'n' roll sound indebted to pure rock, rather than to punk rock. Who knows how they want to be perceived. Musically, I would bet they were encouraged to add tambourines and handclaps on every track and bravely resisted. These songs are just a smidgen below big time rock radio calibre. PT belong to a new lifeboat of bands paddling furiously away from the SS Punk Rock as it takes on water, irreversibly heading to the sea floor, and synthesizes the sounds that inspired them in the first place. Moxee, Interpol and Paris Texas are bands owing huge debts to innovative alternative bands of the 80s. Depending on which song, you can hear The Cult, Midnight Oil, and Big Country in Paris, Texas. Maybe I'm just projecting and they don't listen to that old shit at all, but PT are savvy enough to rock some driving guitars while playing to the hook-craving ear. Other standouts: "Your Death" (with it's Stuart Adamson chiming guitar) and the impish "Hip Replacement." --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**PARK** - "Building A Better \_\_\_\_ (noun)" - Lobster [Nov 06]

Lobster Records did Yellow Card to you, do you forgive them? I remember Park's "No Signal" debut from years ago, and thought it wasn't bad. The ears were kind of awash in cleaned up emo and Park's spin on that theme sounded better than most. I completely missed album 2, so here is #3. Park have eschewed the trappings of their overwrought angst ridden peers, and have given you/us a new sound that is at once wider open and more intricate. "Mississippi Burning" has some bubbling bass lines that Nate Mendel would admire and that chop-chop-chop guitar made me bob my head in appreciation (I admit it). Park 3.0 reminds me a lot of the dexterity of No Knife (a band I liked a lot) crossed with the dewy-eyed sincerity of Mae (a band with a couple real corkers). Park has more than the required/desired/legal limit of pop songs though, and bland pop is not their specialty. Still, fans of Mae have no problem with overly grandiose moments of sincerity, so they should latch onto Park. Overall, some good moments but a bit too weak to make it into regular rotation, and lastly, don't end your album with an acoustic "bonus" number. They're never a bonus. Close. --- Leeds 5/11 [top](#)

**MIKE PARK** For The Love Of Music - Asian Man Records

Mike Park seems like a nice guy. Example: he runs a small record label [Asian Man - home to The Alkaline Trio and The Lawrence Arms, et al, every deal done by handshake], which you have to be nice to do. Example: there are pictures of him growing up filling the liner notes. This "nice guy" nature is what strikes me through this album. The sticker on the front says "Debut acoustic solo CD. Songs about politics, racism & everyday life" this sticker is sort of a turn off to me, but the cd, thankfully doesn't entirely fall into the category it would suggest. First, it's not all acoustic, so you've got that. Second, though there are songs about the aforementioned politics etc., they don't suck. "for the love of music" opens with a standout guitar/cello/singing combo that strikes me as a more upbeat Elliott Smith. "Just like this" is a catchy wheel-beating, summer-driving song, as is "From Korea" though the latter is all about how racist people suck, which seems odd to sing along to at 75 mph. Musically this album is good, not my style, but that's not really the point here. A bunch of songs are catchy, but I wish that the lyrics were less charged, and the songs could just stand on their own. But that's just me. - Theominster Crowley 6/11 [top](#)

**PARTS & LABOR / TYONDAI BRAXTON** Rise, Rise, Rise - Narnack Records

This split full-length album from two of Brooklyn's finest noise makers, Parts & Labor and Tyondai Braxton, is an electric craven party of people doing strange, loud things in the name of a good time. P&L take the first half, and from song to song and even within songs, it sounds like at least two bands are playing. The snapping drumbeats guide the sonic circus, not unlike the crazy polyrhythmic mayhem of Chrome. On a given song you might get vocals with the pounding madness ("Days In Thirds") or you might get a bagpipe and guitar duet ("Jurassic Technology"). P&L are not limited by any musical conventions, they just slide around for a groove then pounce on it and pound it to pieces and look for another. "Good Morning Black Eye" sounds like found sound art, with one person plucking a melody on a toy (out of tune) guitar while someone else bangs nails in to hang up pictures (or something). Like they came back to the tape deck after hanging up art and said, "bloody hell, we left the recorder on!" and decided to use it anyway. "Voltage" chews out a grinding barrage drums, bass, and guitars, all three instruments challenging each other. It's No Means No fighting with Savage Republic over who gets to put the next Can record on at the party. Then the tone reverses course 180 degrees. The next song is keyboard oscillations and nuclear clock beats like Kraftwerk. You either get it now or you don't. P&L's Brooklyn pal **Tyondai Braxton** is another type of sound terrorist. He brings in guest stars from Yeah Yeah Yeahs and Coptic Light Storm to help him with the heavy lifting. "Stand There" lurches forward with martial drums and a clawed being running over amplified strings. "Stand there, don't move, don't change," he chants (I think). There's no relief in this song, no bridge to release some of the accumulating energy. It cycles back to that one lyric, boom. "Disintegrating Relics" is music from another room, a mental ward or a temple. Some eerie, flanged voice drifts in and out while a reverbed western guitar jots down some notes. The tension is dramatic. This track is something like 11 minutes long, and you know something is coming, something will appear. A voice like a muezzin then howls out of the distance, and the song shifts into a dirgelike regularity. The soundscape is again accentuated with helicopter feedback. Later, a Michael Gira type singer spits into the microphone, and finally it wraps up with a little synth weirdness. It would've been cool to have seen some images to go with this sound since it is so heavy with implied connections and your mind wants to make a mental picture of the chaos. The last song, "Jackpot," is a 9 minute collage of piano and timecode feedback. It distorts the melody construct by never allowing anything but trills on the piano to play through until about 4 minutes in. Then minor chords ring out over machine gun drum bursts. This kind of music really is for a different headspace than regular music. You will either get and understand sonic collage and freeform sound experiments or it will drive you mad. This music is as much about what isn't happening in it, as what is. By deconstructing the machine of music and putting it back together in strange little shapes, you're left with something that's neither music nor art, but some netherworld bounded by those twin deities. --- Paul Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**THE PATTERN** Real Feelness - Lookout! Records

I hyped this band to my friend Marko and he shot me down, blam, no hesitation. Evidently these guys used to be in the



Peechees, another Lookout band that was more on the pop-punk/ass side of the street. And as Marko pointed out, this is not a new sound, and yes, garage rock is all the rage now. But Marko, The Makers are fucking done, man, you've got to move on. All of the above can be true, but when I popped this into my car stereo and drove around Hollywood after a bad day at work, all I cared about was the music and how much it rocked. I like it when bands take a page from a cool band and run with it, even if the band happens to be The Stooges and everyone's biting their rhymes now. Yes, the singer is maybe pushing the Iggy-whiny sound a little beyond authenticity, but damn it, they rock! Start with "Search And Destroy" as a compass heading, so you know where they're coming from, then invite The Humpers to lead them through the musical wilderness. Two songs in a row here, "Mary's Sister Margaret Jones," and "Selling Submarines," will make those nay-sayers shut their holes. If nothing else, you can't take away the ass-shaking thump of those two songs, they're undeniably brilliant. The rest of the record has its moments and its downs, as well as some great ups. "She's A Libra" is a confusing little thing that actually would sound better coming from The Makers. Elsewhere on this record, the band will suddenly turn an ordinary sounding song on its head with a snappy pre-chorus chord change that comes off like the Kinks, and then the ordinary song takes over your skepticism and shakes you by the collar bone. Like rock should. --Paul Leeds [top](#)

#### **PAVEMENT** "Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain" - Matador Records

This re-release of Pavement's breakthrough second album is a must-have for any fan of indie rock. Few bands delivered like Pavement, a band of notorious slackers from Stockton, California (or thereabouts) who made deliriously off-kilter pop songs that seemed to flow as effortlessly as the water from No Cal to So Cal. This expanded edition gathers together all of the various ephemera released on EPS, singles, two John Peel sessions, demos, alternate versions, and early versions of songs that appeared on "Wovee Zowiee," plus a thick booklet that details the rise and fall of one of the great American bands. For a few years they were the most talked about band in town and if you came in late and weren't mesmerized by their indie charm, this will explain it all to you. From the quirky little gem "Cut Your Hair" that saw Pavement get its first radio play, to the brilliant "Range Life" and "Gold Soundz," this is the point where Pavement reached maximum potency, long before their whimpering parting shot and spinoff bands. --- Leeds 11/11 [top](#)

#### **PEACHFUZZ** 'About A Bird' - Dionysus Records

Peachfuzz blast out of the gate with a gold-plated little wonder with multiple hooks that sounds so impossibly sweet that I first expected it to be a cover of some 60s psych pop chart topper. But it is all homegrown wonder from the pen and voice and guitar of Andrew Chojnacki. He's evidently a student of brilliant jangle pop and blissed out psychedelic love letters. I don't know how I've missed this band, they are a local trio with a sassy looking mama on bass named Nicole Arslan, which should be enough right there. At any rate, Peachfuzz calls out to the great masters of drone and psych, matching wits with revivalists The Rain Parade, contemps Sugar Plastic, and the early wave of Creation bands who blended a devotion to 60s melodies with garage rock sensibilities (Weather Prophets, Jazz Butcher, et al). Sometimes Peachfuzz swirl out with reverbed guitar, inducing a dreamy lullaby. Sometimes they attack from the front with immediate hooks and chord changes even your dog could follow. What makes them rise far above the masses is the unexpected melodic updrafts that appear out of nowhere and convert a pop song into a pop masterpiece. Witness the chorus that dives out of the sky on "Pop Fiction." What are hooks without words? Hooks, yes, but good lyrics are necessary. Turns of phrase like, "suddenly she felt serene, and it made her feel again like 17," anchor the tunes to earth and keep it music you can replay without getting bored with. A gentle ballad with a heart of fool's good, "Save Us Tammy Faye," plays like a vulcanized "Blackbird," with acoustic guitar and drone notes. Peachfuzz are rooted in the glorious melodic daydreams of the best 60s pop. Title track, "About A Bird" threatens to stick in your head for weeks. Sticky sweet and rough, just like peach fuzz. --- Paul Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **PEARL JAM** Riot Act

Pearl Jam has raised the standards yet again with a timeless piece for the ages. Layers of noisy guitar, sweet solo's and some quintessential Vedder penned lyrics are just some of the aspects that sets 'Riot Act' apart from their previous set, 2000's weak 'Binaural'. The album title and Tool like cover art initially makes you think PJ are back into their Vitalogy era phase but instead deliver a mixture, the soloing of Ten, the space of Binaural and the experimental sounds of No Code. PJ always surprise the listener in some way and RA is no exception with special guest 'Boom' on organ for the most part. The slow psychedelic beginner 'Can't Keep', first performed by Vedder solo with his Ukulele, the version being raw and unpolished. Matt Cameron's 'Oceans' like drumming sets the scene with the twin guitar swirl of Gossard and McCready kicking in all adds up for an inspired opener. As with previous albums ballads are few and far between with only the opener, first single 'I Am Mine' and the country-ish 'Thumbing My Way'. 'Thumbing.' seems out of place with the album title and would have fitted the criteria perfectly for a b-side. 'Love Boat Captain', faultlessness, excellence and brilliance all captured in one song, how can they do it you ask? Well, emotionally drenched with lyrics referring to the tragic Roskilde incident that will pull at music fans heartstrings around the world. 'Booms' beautiful humming organ begins and ends this stand out track. Rockers on this album are brilliant. 'Save You' and 'Ghost' are up there with 'Rearviewmirror' and 'Grievance' in terms of lyrical perfection and just plain rocking. It features more obscurities than an episode of 'The Osbournes' and again highlights Cameron's tub thumping with wild drum fills. 'Save You' provides a killer chorus ("f\*\*\* me if you say something you don't wanna hear"). The rocker is capped off with Vedder screaming like a wild man and an expansive rock climax. 'Crop duster' and 'Green Disease' lyrics are diverse and weirder than the guys have ever attempted and a chorus that could have been borrowed from the REM songbook. 'Get Right' lets the team down, with a lacklustre vocal performance but as always McCready and Matt Cameron steer the ship. 'You Are' is the most adventurous this band has been and takes this long player to a new level with walls of guitar and Cameron's drums filtered through a drum machine. Their most daring track in the vein of the Eastern influenced 'Who you are' and Pink Floyd-y 'Nothing as it seems'. Like on Pearl Jam album 'Riot Act' brings forward album track fillers like the sonic 'Helphelp', the George. W. Bush bashing, part recited 'Bushleaguer' & 'Arc', which draws attention to Vedder's high calibre voice and sounds very much like a Muslim prayer (very soothing). 'All or None' is a special closer that again highlights the Page like sweet soloing of McCready but the fade out ending ruins what could be so much better. All in all the album of the year, simple as that and there have been some killer albums released this year. 'Riot Act' proves their status as the greatest rock band we have and still getting better. This is the classic album they have always been capable of producing. --Andrew Watt [top](#)

#### **PEDRO THE LION** "PTL's Achilles Heel" - Jade Tree Records

Dave Bazan's comforting and warm baritone would be the perfect voice for an animated bear, all soft and fuzzy and lovely and gentle. Then there's the other side of Bazan, the one who viciously cheats on his wife and documents the ensuing mental trauma (on last year's "Control.") Bears sure look cozy but they can rip you to pieces. Enter Pedro The Lion. They've been moving into a more rock stance since Bazan's early days of recording alone in his room. Those fragile songs in half time have grown into a band that comes close to feeling like Sebadoh getting a shot of Jets To Brazil. PTL have a level of honesty in their music that sometimes has rendered songs mundane (like the one about passing slow trucks on the freeway) to the brutally frank ("Penetration.") Through it all, Bazan's voice rises full of weight and emotion, like a harsh sun over rough seas. The lower register of his range is like a cello and when PTL slows a song down it's natural to feel it is dripping with sadness. On this new album, PTL hopes to shed some of the mopery charges levelled at them. Bazan has de-personalized the topics of this new batch and that's been enough to play out some rope and give him the necessary distance from the subject matter to create songs with less confession and more progression in them. Starting with the sublime "Bands With Managers," this PTL album is a whole different, ahem, beast, than it's forebears. You might even say a couple of these new tracks don't really sound like PTL anyway ("Keep Swinging," "Transcontinental") and you'd be right. However, when Bazan does a proper song in his milieu, the results can be staggering, "...now that my blushing bride, has done what she was born to do, it's time to bury dreams, and raise a son, to live vicariously through..." he mourns on "I Do." It makes for easier listening when PTL lighten it up a bit, as they've done. It's not as bracing as "Control," and is more of a return to the pensive, thoughtful, inward music that broke your heart. "Achilles Heel" will be equally at home on your stereo whether you are getting artsy in your loft or getting wasted with your friends or getting busy with your woman. It's a sensitive and confidential band that feels broken in like an old sweater. It's comfort music especially when you don't want to be comforted. --- 8/11 Leeds [top](#)

#### **PEPPER** In With The Old - Volcom Entertainment

Think of MTV hosting spring break with a live band entertaining the crowds on commercial breaks. I picture Hawaiian shirts and wrap-around sunglasses and shorts and Vans and dudes with bleached tips on their spiky haircuts. Some will think that sounds rad, so read on if that's you. Pepper is party-time music for the board-snapping generation. This is their 2nd album, and they hail from Kona, Hawaii, so you get a lot of Island vibration (brah) and groove friendly rock. Pepper pack enough slow numbers for the girls to shake their bikinis and the boys to down some more beer-bongs. Pepper shares the pigeonhole with Common Sense and Sublime. They groove, they skank, they play freewheeling stoner rock for beach parties. The singer/bassist, Bret Bollinger, to my ears sounds exactly like Sublime, so if you can't wait for Sublime's record label to release every scrap of spare tape he was on including his answering machine messages, Pepper is your bag. He's got a good voice that pleads and cajoles,

smooth one minute, and then sexy-for-the-ladies. I reference Sublime to help match up Pepper with its future fans, not because of any love for Sublime. They do cool it down quite a bit more than the OC rockers, and that's where they owe a tip of the bong to Santa Barbara's rock-reggae combo Common Sense. Pepper has done a few Warped Tours and their easy skanking vibrations must be a welcome respite from the non-stop Good Charlotte clone factory. Although a trio, Pepper hired keyboard gun Ronnie King, and his ministrations raise this up a few notches. He gives the songs some hipshaking groove when they need it, or gooses them into the chorus and generally rounds out the sound. Overall this record strikes me as Jimmy Buffet for Generation Y. Again, fans of Sublime, Island style and new-reggae, hit this. Personally, I can't stand this. ---Paul Leeds 2/11 [top](#)

**PERCY FARM** - "The End's In The Beginning" - Ships At Night [Oct 07]

How many rock albums you heard lately that started with a clarinet? This outfit brings an arsenal of instruments with them, like the Pogues of even LA band Soda & His Million Piece Band. Add more mandolin and banjo to The Decemberists and you're on the right track. If you can find room to squeeze Arcade Fire into that frame, with male and female vocals on songs that snap unexpectedly into catchy hooks, you'll understand. Percy Farm even jam out a couple of pop songs (Route #132 and Tales From The Sea). There is a wide range of difference in the soaring vocals of "Mister Grinch" and the alt-country voice-crackings of "Sarah Got Her Freedom." Lots to enjoy here. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

**THE PERISHERS** "Let There Be Morning" - Netzwerk [August 2005]

Mellow shimmering pop songs from Sweden. The Perishers are a bit more musically interesting than Coldplay but only just. To hit the nail on the head, think of Soundtrack Of Our Lives stealing Coldplays' fakebook, and there ya go! There's nothing wrong with that formula, if you are in the mood for quiet, fragile balladry, you will be pleased with singer Ola Kluff's gorgeous voice. If you require a slow-dancing anthem to remember your senior prom with, you can do no better than "There's Nothing Like You And I" with its sumptuous beauty that demands you hold your partner close and shut your eyes. However, prom dances aside, there are precious few activities requiring clothing that call for such a sedate and languid soundtrack. Gardening? Maybe. ---Vermin [top](#)

**SANDRO PERRI** - "Tiny Mirrors" - Constellation [Oct 07]

The Polmo Polpo mastermind returns with his second "solo" work. As time presses on, Perri's work is sounding more like another Canadian arts collective, Broken Social Scene. The first several minutes on this album sound recorded live at a small coffeeshop - acoustic guitars, gentle vocals and even whistling. Only 9 people play on this new album, one short of enough for a game of hockey. "Double Suicide" is so frail it sounds like cocktail hour poetry. "The Drums" has a great vocal that lilts and seeps around the edges of the basic guitar track. While Polmo Polpo was a courageous band, Perri's solo work is very gentle and soft textured, a completely different animal. I appreciate Perri's voice and his music but this record is so understated it takes patience to get ahold of the finer moments, like the sweet Billie Holiday lullaby "The Mime." I wish there was more going on in these tracks, more percussion like is found on "You're the One" or more melodic feats attempted. Mostly it's gentle and breezy, a different side to a complex musical mind. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**SANDRO PERRI** - "Plays Polmo Polpo" - Constellation [Nov 06]

Perri plays and *is* Polmo Polpo. Not sure what's going on, maybe he's trying to prove a point? 3 of these 5 songs are the same songs from PP's terrific album "Like Hearts Swelling." Or at least they have the same titles because they sound completely different. On "Requiem For A Fox," Perri plays it this time with some loose-stringed twanging that gives it almost a Hawaiian guitar sound. I'm lost on how much of reinterpretation the song is (he could have given it a new title and no one would've been the wiser), but it sounds great. Perri has a truly interesting voice with a Neil Young type of gentleness and on "Dreaming," he debuts it with acoustic guitar, in what sounds like a live to 2-track take. The other "new" song, "Circles," is another gentle song plucked on guitar and sung in that sweet croon. These songs are cleaned up and more open than usual Polmo Polpo material, and I find the laid bare approach refreshing antidote to so much of the artsier-than-thou music radiating from Toronto. --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**PERSEPHONE'S BEES** "Notes From The Underworld" - Columbia [June 2006]

Have you been hoping The Cardigans would unite with The Fiery Furnaces and take over every vintage shop in Manhattan? Behold: Persephone's Bees. These mainstream pop songs have playful melodies and unexpected turns, like when a song darts skyward ("Nice Day") followed by a middle section breakdown - you are forgiven for thinking these are secret jam sessions between toy shop collage musicians and hipster dancefloor androids. Some songs have a cinematic kitsch in place of structure, sounding like songs from obscure 60s JD films ("Muzika Dyla Fil'ma"), and some appear to be cut from wholly different cloth from the rest of the album ("Paper Plane") where fuzzed out guitars and rock pianos take over. In a strange twist, this one song is my favorite on the album and almost alone in its old garage sound. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**PHENOMENA OF INTERFERENCE** by Steve Dalachinsky & Matthew Shipp - hopscotch records [Jan 2006]

For those of us combing the record stores in search of beat-inspired poetry (think Allen Ginsberg) spoken aloud to dissonant piano rhythms, Steve Dalachinsky's "phenomena of interference" should suffice. I predict this spoken word album won't gain a wide audience, an assumption based solely on another assumption of mine: Most people prefer their poetry to remain between the pages of a book, not in their 5-disc CD changer. That being said, the poetry itself is compelling stuff and full of vivid imagery. A couple of lines that come to mind are "invisible bodies of piss shit & blood" and "the trust fund baby feeding on the monkey's scraps." Dalachinsky isn't just trying to shock his listeners with a few choice cuss words and graphic phrases though. This is a man's thought processes laid bare in the form of poetry written with a rather unique perspective, all wrapped up nicely with piano by Matthew Shipp and an authentic East Coast accent courtesy of the island Dalachinsky calls home: Manhattan. These thought processes are hard to follow at times (I still can't figure out what the hell the poem, Gal I Leo, is supposed to mean), but it seems that clarity isn't the point. He wants to keep you guessing, and does so, through made-up words and artfully strung together phrases and themes that jump around from homelessness to "white america." The disc comes packaged with a book of lyrics, for those disciples of the superiority of book over CD, but believe me when I tell you the vocalized performance is easier to follow. The book is somewhat of a jumbled mess. It should fit nicely, however, in the bookshelf next to your Ginsberg and Bukowski. ---Melissa Treolo 6/11 [top](#)

**PINK FLOYD** - The Syd Barrett Story DVD - Zeit Media [Oct 07]

It's interesting to see the other 4 members of Floyd talk about the madcap Syd Barrett. He founded the band and was the influence behind the spacey songs on the first two albums, but then promptly departed. For my ears, those were great albums but nothing compared to the grandeur Floyd would achieve once Barrett's replacement, David Gilmour, joined. Really, is "Bike" your favorite Floyd song? "So David, how do you feel about Syd's hagiography when you were in the band for 30 years and he was in it for 2?" No one asks that, but they should have done. I personally love Pink Floyd to the point where their music is part of my DNA. And all of the really amazing Floyd material was long after Syd went to the nuthouse. I almost feel it's a disservice, a slap in the face, for the Syd Barrett hagiography to continue, but evidently I'm alone in this. Anyway, this doc really does a credible job of explaining the cult of Syd. Rare early TV appearances, concert footage, home movies, plus three hours of DVD extras including Barrett songs performed by Robyn Hitchcock and Graham Coxon. Set the controls... --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

**PLAIN WHITE T'S** - "Every Second Counts" - Hollywood/Fearless Records [Dec 06]

This is the kind of CW network-ready plain ole power pop that makes me queasy. All hooky, a little punky and just too darn clean. I can see some sixteen year old La Jolla girls strolling up the beach with PWT's playing in the background. Seems like that's what kids the last few years are into, and based on their name and look, I wanted to dig this Chicago crew. But the bubblegum opener, "Our Time Now," places these boys on the musical map squarely between Jimmy Eat World and Simple Plan, the kind of Southern California teenage rock that is all production and fluff. At their best, the PWT's hint of Weezer - give "Hate (I Really Don't Like You)," or "Friends Don't Let Friends Dial Drunk" a listen - but unfortunately, the Plain White T's are tedious pop that's tough not to hate. ---Nate Fitz 5/11 [top](#)

**PLANKTON** 'Undertone' - Feral Media [May 2005]

Plankton, coming to us from Australia (a country and a continent!), finally give music lovers what they deserve; a full length stew of jazzy electric happenings. This four member collaboration of music students previously released an EP that coincided with their early live shows. But with their debut album, Undertone, Plankton raise the bar for all those eclectic genre-avoiding groups out there. I hate to make these analogies but - take the jazz sensibilities of Do Make Say Think, the intelligence of Pink Floyd and the erratic behavior of 1-Speed Bike, and you're almost half way there to understanding Plankton. But what's to understand? Undertone is beautiful and belligerent at the same time. Songs like "June 13" and especially "Fascinated Mouse" are dreamlike but in no way sleepy. On the other hand, "Tension in the Line" is what it sounds like. Too many groups fall into

one type of sound when they use electronic music. They are either an airy, chilled out group or an aggressive, fast paced group. Plankton's Undertone is neither and both. One of the strongest tracks, "Sad Clone Battle" sounds like a sci-fi noir film with its saxophone and echoing beats. It reminds you of something that you can't put your finger on, but you'll keep trying. Plankton has created a truly unique and lively album. It won't disappoint. --- Evan Rude 9/11 [top](#)

**PLEASE MR. GRAVEDIGGER** "Throw A Beat" - Pluto Records [May 2005]

A pretty good amount of noise and swagger on this EP from the San Diego punk upstarts. The singer yelps like it's 1969 and he's just gotten back from The Stooges while his bandmates play a modern take on the punk chestnut. They occasionally slip up and abandon an older, wilder style in favor of new school throaty yells. It's hard to tell if they're getting better, but this EP seems a move up from their nuskook LP last year. They sound like they've been digging lots of Muder City Devils and MC5 in between beer bongs. "Rocket Science" has the best amount of energy and pace, like they might be serious about kicking ass on their next record. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

**PLEASURE FOREVER** - Sub Pop

This band was called Slaves on their previous record. Besides the name change, PF have pumped some more energy into their music. The Slaves record was all slow, strange songs like something Nick Cave would write. This PF record is way better. It's the piano that really separates this band from the pack. The songs about orgies and death, like "You And I Were Meant To Drown" and "Meet Me In Eternity" show the band's fascination with the pleasures of this world and the ultimate result of indulgence. I don't have any other records that sound like PF. They are coming from a place musically that is cool and lush, that likes high drama and tragedy. The photo on the cover is unflattering, but know that these 3 guys rock hard in a different but killer way. When you want something intense, without screaming, something that entertains as well as rocks you, this is the record. This music would be perfect in a David Lynch movie because they have the same sense of bizarre, the same attraction to sex and death, and pull off their art on their own terms.--Scott [top](#)

**THE PLEASURES OF MERELY CIRCULATING** - s/t - Ettabelle Records [Oct 07]

This trash rock trio wraps their cotton candy around concrete and lobs it at your head. Like all good lo-fi outfits, TPOMC bash it out on whatever gear and don't belabor the middle 8s. It's all straight up garage rock, with the exception of having sassy Jeanne Sinclair on vocals and guitar. She has a playful take on leading a rock band but when it comes to rocking, it's no game. "Unbellyfeel" has some punky wave vocal yelps and some anti-cool scene lyrics, and a guitar bridge that has "overdub" stamped all over it. But that's alright, it can be a little sloppy because it gives it more character in this case. They thrash out a four on the floor punk ditty dedicated to Ledbelly, another one shouts out to anti-tech Luddites. TPOMC are fairly modest in style and approach but they play with a lot of heart and come across as a rockin' garage trash band worth checking out. --- Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

**THE PLOT TO BLOW UP THE EIFFEL TOWER** - "Inri" EP - Artfag Records [Sept 2006]

The Plot To Blow Up The Eiffel Tower is a solid four piece outfit from San Diego that delivers their dark tinged goods on this three song EP. They have an interesting and diverse sound that taps into slightly somber 80's pre-goth references like Bauhaus, Fade to Black, or Specimen, but at the same time have some more edgy pop elements and employ horn sections in cool ways much like Rocket From the Crypt, another great San Diego band. The cover of Bowie's "Boys Keep Swinging" is really good and definitely worth a listen. Also included is a new version of their song "INRI", which was remixed by Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and is quite good (although I've never heard the original version). This three song sampling was one of the more interesting CDs to slide across my plate lately. A full length album is on the way along with a U.S. Tour later this year and if they came to my town I'd feel a twinge of guilt if I didn't check them out. 8 on a scale of 1-11. Swede [top](#)

**THE PLOT TO BLOW UP THE EIFFEL TOWER** "Love In The Fascist Brothel" - Revelation Records (Feb 2005)

Brace yourself. You think you're ready, but you're not. The Plotters come flying out of the gate, hitting your ears like two jet planes, a crying baby, and a jackhammer all at once. These guys are the new stars of the hyper-rock underground. An ideal bill would find them alongside 400 Blows, Lightning Bolt, and Year Future. This record has the ugly uncleanness of small pressing punk 7 inches, that beautiful symmetry of art where the songs sound like they were recorded in a cage and the imagery matches the nihilism they promise. This album is awash in deconstructed Nazi iconography, starting with the cover which has a Nazi male head on a female body slipping bare-breasted out of a camisol, about to have doggie style sex with a horse-headed woman in thigh-highs. Surrounded by roses, of course. The lyrics are provocative and secretive, mostly shards of broken glass that cut without revealing too much: "...march like cancer into the crowd, watch the leopard cuz he eats his own, everyone in strung outs city got it out for my head..." It's like a series of dirty polaroids that adds up to a demented whole. At times sounding like Saccharine Trust on a really terrible speed binge while "The Night Porter" unreels in the background, this band is noisy, chaotic, dirty and full of adrenalin. --- Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

**THE PLUS ONES** "Oh Me Of Little Faith" - Insubordination Records [July 2005]

The Plus Ones have a pedigree stretching back to Bay Area bands that I won't list here because it might give you the wrong impression that the Plus Ones are somehow in those bands' shadow. You couldn't be more wrong. When the Plus Ones' frontman Joel Reader decided to write the biggest, catchiest pop songs imaginable, he embarked on an ever-shifting journey that has seen a slough of players in and out of the band but the current incarnation has struck gold. The songs are giant paeons to summer-filled pop songs and new guitarist and second singer Alexis has hammered the sound into shape. A little more steel in the backbone with new drummer Luis Illades, and Alexis' barre chord give more pow to the pop punk. "Suicide Pact (You First)" is one of many clever and brilliant songs. Their cover of Bob Mould's "Helpless" is a canny choice because Reader is likewise an expansive singer with a great ear for melody. In fact, if you take where Husker Du ended up, their final burst of glory on "Warehouse," that is a good launch pad for the Plus Ones' sound. This is a great batch of songs that strikes a balance between their pop punk backgrounds and a grown-up indie rock sound full of terrific vocals and catchy rhythms. ---Leeds 8/11. [top](#)

**POLMO POLPO** Like Hearts Swelling - Constellation

Polmo Polpo is the newest addition to the wonderful Constellation Records family. And a nice addition they are. "Like Hearts Swelling" plays like a human breathing. It is so natural and saturated with organic sound - my heart beats with it. Electronic at its core, its beats are simple and repetitive. But each layer blankets the next, making it anything but simple. The drones are beautiful, the industrial hits are wonderfully soft and recognizable music teases. The album's strongest song, "Requiem for a Fox," begins with a cold and sterile drone until optimistic interruptions reveal themselves slowly. What follows is a Chariots Of Fire style home stretch that makes you want to hear it all over again. What strikes me is this album's patience. Adding chords echo in and out and are quickly missed. In "Sky Histoire," the sounds of waves breaking perfectly complement Polmo Polpo's passive-aggressive style. I can't help but feel uncomfortable and comfortable at the same time. Uncomfortable because I don't know how to characterize Polmo Polpo and comfortable because I don't have to. --- Evan Rude 9/11 [top](#)

**THE POLYPHONIC SPREE** The Beginning Stages Of... - Good Records

What a trippy experience this band is! Part stage production, part tent revival, all sweet sound. 27 band members are credited on the album, including 10 for the choir, and individual players of theremin, trumpet, flute, harp, french horn, trombone, tuba, timpani, strings, keyboards, guitar, bass and drums. All these instruments make the music huge. It's a racket that exudes a glorious vibe. Brian Wilson and Mercury Rev joined in a roof-raising effort to get you on your feet with your hands in the air. There are no song titles listed by choice or accident it's unclear. Second track, where they sing "Sun" a lot, is a huge bright and bold paen to being happy in the sun, and takes its cues from "Sgt. Pepper's" and "Pet Sounds" in equal doses?no pun intended. Overwhelmingly positive and uplifting, the Polyphonic Spree are a tab with no side effects and no mental hand-wringing. You get the smiles, the good vibrations, only. Lead by Tim DeLaughter of Tripping Daisy fame, TPS are from the planet of Texas, home of big churches, big cults, and big melodies. For those fans of Tripping Daisy who thought the drug-induced death of their guitarist meant the demise of this legacy, TPS is a phoenix rising from the ashes. DeLaughter's voice is delicate and sweet. The members of TPS wear choir robes of white and when you mix the snowy vestments with their smiling faces, naturally you think they're some kind of cult. If so, this cult looks like a lot of fun. Plenty of goodlooking guys and gals, everyone chipping in their little part to create the psychedelic whole. The themes are esoteric and gentle, with lyrics like "?a love like this / keeps us warm." Nothing heavy. Song 5 is a quiet number, an almost sleepy hypnotic swirl of phazed singing and horns that makes you want to lie down on the cool grass and just look at the clouds. And although the whole production looks and walks and talks like a revival, religion is nowhere to be found. Pure joy wins out again. --Paul Leeds [top](#)

**PONY UP** - "Make Love to the Judges With Your Eyes" - Dim Mak Records[Feb07]



Pony Up is a Canadian girl band that plays melodic wispy ditties that are light and airy. There's an element of simple innocence to the songs and the overall vibe is one of soft edged pop with a decidedly feminine slant. This ain't really rock and roll in my book and if Juliana Hatfield is too soft to you then you definitely won't dig this. It's not bad, it's just a step away from nouveau folk and lacks any sort of edge. Still, fans of other chick bands like Sleater Kinney, That Dog, and their ilk might take a shine to this sparkling ball of fluff. Personally I'd move along, but if you need something inoffensive and sickly sweet to play in the background when your folks or grandparents come over for a visit then this one's for you. 5 on a scale of 1-11. --- The Swede [top](#)

#### **IGGY POP** "A Million In Prizes Anthology" - Virgin [July 2005]

Iggy Pop is almost 60 years old (he turns 60 in 2007) and his sinewy, leathery exterior is an illustrated history of the rise of underground music. Born Eric Osterberg in Michigan, he rechristened himself and became a legend, but only after fellow Detroit wheels the MC5 insisted that their record label had to sign The Stooges if they wanted the MC5, sort of the kid brother, Kevin Dillon/Casey Affleck clause. Little did they know they were signing the godfathers of punk. Iggy often gets this tag for himself but truly The Stooges were greater than the parts. Iggy's Stooge work sounds as crazy and explosive today as it did in 1969, and much of their appeal came from the on and off stage shenanigans of their whippet-thin singer, including public sex acts (with both genders), hard drugs of every stripe, famous sexual/professional relationships with Bowie and Jagger and a gift for being one of the greatest frontmen ever. Now on this 2-disc set, his work is anthologized for easy consumption. Half of disc 1 is Stooges songs, including songs that you simply must know if you're going to pretend any knowledge of music, like Gimme Danger, I Wanna Be Your Dog, Raw Power, and Down On The Street. If you don't have all 3 Stooges albums, start here, but really, there is no reason why you should not have all 3, even if it means cutting off your phone or not renewing your prescriptions to afford it. Next you get a fair sampling of Iggy's best solo stuff, including the hits from "The Idiot" and "Lust For Life," two albums also well worth owning. So far, this is all great stuff, impeccable. On Disc 2, they throw you a bone with "Some Weird Sin," also from "Lust For Life," but then comes a tour of the many adrift records Iggy made during the 80s and beyond: a sampling you can only term courageous for its inclusion of hits as well as major duds. Is it better to include songs from "Naughty Little Doggie" and "Avenue B" and "Party" when those 3 slots could have been given to better albums? There are songs from 12 solo albums plus his duet with Debby Harry and 2 live tracks with his reformed Stooges in 93. All in all it feels two discs are not enough to adequately anthologize Iggy Pop's legacy. A 4 disc set could cover it better, but this collection is mostly a solid affair. ---Leeds 8/11 [top](#)

#### **PRE** - "Epic Fits" - Skin Graft Records [Oct 07]

Noise terrorism with an enraged female singer = Pre. The songs clip along and sound similar to a loose Yeah Yeah Yeah's song and then everything flips into white noise and shrieking. If you had this on vinyl, you'd think your needle just snapped off. Pre are full of clever and difficult temp shifts, time signatures, and jazzy syncopation and improvisation. Great song titles too: "Ace Cock," "Dude Fuk," "Fudging On Our Folks" and so on. It's all so blindingly fast and jagged they should be filed under "what the fuck." It's not an easy listen, mind. They are exploding with energy like a kid cranked up on Ritalin and Red Bulls. Pre are having a blast, but melody, song structure and lyrics are chucked out the window. Singer Keeks Matsuura tries to pierce your eardrums with her screaming and the band does a jackhammer number on your skull. You've been warned. --- Leeds 3/11 [top](#)

#### **PREMONITIONS OF WAR / BENUMB** split CD - Thorp Records [July 2005]

If this had been vinyl I would have suspected two things when the needle dropped on POW: 1.) that my needle was broken off and a jagged stump was scraping curlicues in the wax, or 2.) the needle was broken and it was on the wrong speed. However, this came on CD and so my first exposure to POW is one of grindcore sludge singing and guitars-in-the-next room recording style. There is a certain low slung charm to the thudding, plodding low notes they crank out, like Queens Of The Stone Age run through a shockingly dirty filter. The vocals get lower and lower until they're just a videogame monster croak. They use a slow tempo, deliberate sludge sound like Sabbath and GWAR. Half Two is taken over by Benumb. While they might be numb 'n' shit, their style is more abrasive and mathrock. The hardcore riffing drums and bass fight with each other in a speedmetal assault. Some of this sounds like Neurosis, like it's coming through a punk background dosed with underground metal. It's like a few solid walls of noise coming in on different frequencies while the singer gets impaled on the nails holding it together (0% Down Enslavement For Life). If this is a genre you're interested in, you can check out two better than average bands here. For the newbie it's kind of like music for killing. -- Sid Arthur 4/11. [top](#)

#### **PRESTON SCHOOL OF INDUSTRY** All This Sounds Gas - Matador

This is Spiral Stairs' new band, the guitar player from Pavement. Sometimes his guitar work was as loose as if he made the part up on the spot, in the studio. That must've been intentional because the guitar work on PSOI is sure and bold. Nothing loosey-goosey here. In the greatness that was Pavement, Steve Malkmus gets all the credit, and unfairly so. Just like The Clash, the occasional song by the guitarman made the album fuller and better. Spiral wrote a couple songs on every Pavement album, and ones like "Date With IKEA" and "Hit The Plane Down" are just as good as most of ol' Malky's stuff. What will really surprise Pavement fans is how good Spiral can get. One song, "A Treasure @ Silver Bank" has lap-steel guitar and organ with Spiral sounding like Lou Reed. There was something missing on Malky's solo album: it was like the sense of fun was gone, and some pretentiousness was inserted in its place. The PSOI held onto that craziness. This record is richer and more accomplished also. My favorite song on this is "Encyclopedic Knowledge Of." It just doesn't seem possible that someone who spent so much time deconstructing rock music could come up with a song or an album like this: tuneful, fun, low-key, and totally pro. Welcome to center stage, Mr. Stairs. --Paul [top](#)

#### **PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES** The New Romance - Matador Records

PGMG have turned in a greatly improved sound on their sophomore effort, which was ably recorded by Phil Ek, the man who helped clarify Built To Spill's explorations. PGMG is lead by two alumni of Murder City Devils, bassist Derek Fudesco and the pixie-voiced and foxy-faced Andrea Zollo (who did backup duty "Empty Bottles, Broken Hearts"). Zollo's sings like a modern Annabella Lwin, high and pretty, with kitten sexuality and a cadence that nostalgically recalls other bands like Raincoats, X Ray Spex, Penelope Houston, and at times The Sundays. "All Medicated Geniuses" is a great throwback to the new wave altrock female-dominated brilliance of those bands. Underneath this is a remarkable band never sitting still, creating a soundstorm of zigzagging guitar lines ("Chemical, Chemical"). "The Teeth Collector" chugs into high gear with a feeding-back guitar chopping up chords like a Gang Of Four intro, then shifts into overdrive with repeated notes and slides. I really like what this guy is doing on the guitar. The guitars never just coast along or wait for the chorus, it's like the guitarists (Nathan Thelen) is too impatient to let any time go to waste, and it's obvious he's too talented and creative to give up that much spotlight, either. Thelen fucking kills it in this song. The energy and pace of these songs combine the alt-rock experimentations of English post-punk and the foetid rock underground of the Pacific Northwest. Too often bands with good female singers are content to sit back and let her do all the work: not PGMG. Maybe part of it is Ek's understanding of the rhythm section, as evidenced with all that Built To Spill off-time drumming. On "Holy Names," drummer Nick Dewitt and bassist (Derek Fudesco) provide a forward momentum akin to the straightforward urgency of a U2 song and then the holes are filled with flourishes that are almost jazz. PGMG also have on hand a first-rate keyboardist (J. Clark), whose key lines sometimes are Farfisa countermelodies (title track), and other times harmonies weaseling into the space between the guitars and Zollo. The keys cast a new wave light over some of the proceedings, a nostalgic bent that may or may not appeal to you. The album closes on a weak note, the last two tracks being the soggiest. Closing with a ballad should be guarded against, especially a cute little bedtime ditty like this one. It would have been better to emphasize the melding of musical styles and the skills of the band, to leave the listener with that lingering note that will bring them back for more. Also, dig that photo under the CD tray. ---Paul Leeds 7/11 [top](#)

#### **PRETTY GIRLS MAKE GRAVES** If You Hate Your Friends You're Not Alone - Sub Pop

Murder City Devils broke up and the pieces were cast to the four winds. Bass player Derek Fudesco ended up here, in a band named after a (great) song by The Smiths, with Andrea Zollo (backup vox on the first MCD record) as the lead singer. Can't tell if this record is a reaction to the MCD or not, but the A side sounds like an early MCD song with a sweet voiced female singer. There is also a vintage feel to the song. The insistent chorus "don't tell me what I wanna know" could have been done by the Raincoats back in the day. On both sides you get Seattle rock guitars and busy fretwork. The backing vocals sound just like Spencer, which is kinda weird, considering. The B side is the stronger cut. It would not surprise me if this band set out to sound like the Avengers with rock guitars. The sound is rudimentary, almost simple, like the band is still finding its legs. The playing is tight and the songs are not bad. If they want to make it though, PGMG need to come up with something that makes their music stand out from the pack. [top](#)

#### **PRIDE KILLS** "Deep In The Heart" - Thorp Records [July 2005]

This is my third time rewriting this review. I'll keep it simple now. Pride Kills is one flavor hardcore thug-rock by way of Texas.

13 songs of bludgeoning self-righteousness with coalmine vocals, somewhere between Skrewdriver and Gwar, with stupidity to match. It's a commentary on the state of hardcore today that PK have any fans period. To be a hardcore kid today you must have been obsessed with proving you're harder than the kids next to you at the shows, you must be the tough guy in the pit, you must spew unending tales of how you're gonna kick everyone's ass. The mindset is a trip back to a troubled 15 year old's trauma at getting thrown into a dumpster by jocks, except now the jocks are in the band. The same criticism could be made of gangsta rap, so if you want gang lifestyle set to supercheese hardcore, PK is your band. This "scene" is against every element of punk I ever respected, from Ian MacKaye to Crass to Jello to Jack Grisham, and all points in between, the ethos has been about being smart and living your own life. This new hardcore shit is all about being a sheep and a follower, a stooge, a bitch. It's so strongly anti-female that it tells you what's really the deal with sweaty dudes bumping into other sweaty dudes in the pit. STOP FRONTING! These guys fucking like to fucking use the fucking f-word a fucking lot. There are guest vocals and shout-outs from 8 people in their scene which they themselves describe as a "fucking meathead, fucking mean" scene. Full on hook me up with that. At least two songs talk about beating the shit out of people: "...save that pussy shit for your town, sooner or later it comes around, we're running this shit, know who you're fucking with, thought you were more than you are, but got beaten fucking down..." and: "...I won't forgive and I'll never forget... forgetting you and all your shit, fuck your handshake you two-faced bitch..." Now here's the real shocker, they all thank their moms and dads and two of them thank Jesus for inspiration. What? Talking out your neck like that and giving props to Jesus is a sacrilege. Jesus was always talking about fucking kicking someone's fucking ass for messing with his scene. So in the name of Jesus I'm going to ask PK to kindly take out their Bibles and then READ them. Amen. ---Jeremy Miller 1/11 [top](#)

#### PRIMAL SCREAM Evil Heat - Epic Records

You never know where Bobby Gillespie will be taking you on each Primal Scream release. He's had his infatuation with acid-house inspired music, cock rock, industrial, psychedelic rock, to name a few genres. Known as a drug band, Primal Scream's music can leave you cold if you're not into taking ecstasy and staring at blinking lights all night. The new record, Evil Heat, packs the trippy melodic songs missing from last year's "XTRMNTR" record while slapping on thick electronic walls of noise and sampled grooves. Gillespie's former Jesus & Mary Chain bandmate Jim Reid makes a guest vocal appearance, as does super-waif Kate Moss. Kevin Shields from My Bloody Valentine even stops by to lend some guitar and production trickery. Evil Heat is a concoction of British alt rock trends. This record is way better than Xtrmntr and successfully incorporates the dancefloor thunder of Vanishing Point with the aggressive techno that has become their trademark. "Miss Lucifer" is the techno assault single, mirroring "Vanishing Point's" tripout anthem "Kowalski," and the bonus disc features the video. The video has several naked devil girls with horns and tails crawling across the ceiling of a dance club and attempting to mate with unsuspecting men. Evil heat, all night long. It also has the band playing four or five songs live. The new Primal Scream sound is a greatest hits of their previous musical expeditions. "City" is a guitar and drums rock pounder, as rock as anything they've done. "Autobahn" is an homage to Kraftwerk, a gently urgent synth instrumental rolling gently past, like cities from the window of a BMW. "Scanner Darkly" is a reference to a great Philip K. Dick novel about a psychic narcotics officer and reinforces the sci-fi / futuristic / paranoia atmosphere with its robotic and distorted synth lines. Evil Heat cooks with a lot more soul than its predecessor, almost like PS spent last year listening to Spiritualized, on display in "Space Blues #2." Great band, great album. --Paul Leeds [top](#)

#### PSEUDO HEROES Betraying Angry Thoughts - Theologian Records

This record gets progressively better with each song until they hit their stride around song #5. Like a live show where the band is cold and needs to get into it, kinda strange. But by song #5, PH are in their groove. That groove is one foot in the Jawbreaker school of rock and one foot in the Bad Religion school. My tastes run such that I love the Jawbreaker-esque tunes and I'm not all that into the Bad Religion ones, but it's probably those BR songs that got Oem signed in the first place. So when the Pseudos heat up they get white hot and they rip out songs that sound like "Bivouac" era Jawbreaker. You know, the chunky guitars, rolling bass lines and angst ridden vocal-chord burning singing. The great shit of rock and roll! This is definitely a record for any fans of the bands named above, plus any fans of melodic punk. --Paul [top](#)

#### PSEUDO MELLOR "Demos" - Cloudniz Records (Feb 2005)

No sir, we are not going to hate this, despite the plea to do just that on the CD label. This band hails from England and plays a different style on each of these 5 songs. First song "Because" is a loose drunk punk that could easily come from the garages of Detroit. Influenced by DMZ and Bantam Rooster, or any other band that values hitting the strings extra hard while moving the fingers twice as slow. Attitude over technique. Track 2, "Sell Out Example" well, we could hate the song if we had to hear it again. It sticks out like a cross hanging between Madonna's tits = it just don't fit. Track 3 "Silver Link" is an instrumental Spacemen 3 type of dirge, and the fourth song "Drag" is acoustic. Many bases are being covered here. The last song features slide guitar and almost a Television/Wedding Present vocal delivery. The singer is more aloof than on the first track, hanging back. Side note, wasn't Joe Strummer's real surname "Mellor" or is this a nod to the Liverpool striker Mellor? Anyway, it's a bit mystifying to hear each song sound like a different band, but these are likely only demos, and as such, they sketch out the ground this band will cover when they record properly. A strange bag, but hopefully they will venture into a direction that allows them to rock and pay homage to Television at the same time, things that are hinted at here in this embryonic snapshot of the band. --- Sid Arthur 5/11 [top](#)

#### PSOMA Fear The Penguin - Amherst House Records

This is Justin from Nerf Herder's project that lets him be the rock star in the middle. Justin learned his songwriting by hanging around and playing in bands with Rivers Cuomo and Kevin Ridel, back in Connecticut. He even has his own major label deal when he played in Shufflepuck with Adam Orth. Justin deserves a turn in the spotlight. He's assembled a tight band around him, Ian, Marc, and Pete, who bring their musical differences together under one roof for a sum that is greater than the parts. So, with Justin's roots leading back to pre-Weezer Rivers, and his day job thumping along with Nerf Herder, what's Psoma sound like? Kinda like what Weezer would sound like if they jammed with the OHerder. It's fast pop, big choruses, and a positive get-off-your-ass-and-rock music. Standout cuts are the angsty pop-punk of "Anxiety" and "Naked," and the powerpop ballad "Last Song." Psoma are more rock than punk, and more pop than power-they write a great three minute pop song. - Matt Vermin [top](#)

#### PULP We Love Life - Island

Well this record still has not been released domestically and there is no release date in sight. That means \$18 at the record store. Is it worth it? Where are Jarvis Cocker & Co. on the new disc? The biting social satire evident on tracks like "Different Class" and "I Spy" has been replaced with pensive meditations on life, and well, love. The single "Trees" is another crooning ballad that finds Jarvis without any mockery or guile. Maybe he has run out of bile. The music is more ethereal and designed not for the dance floor but for the bedroom floor. Cocker is nearly 40 and maybe the youthful shenanigans have worn thin for him. The only song on here that feels like the campy New Romantic of old is "The Night That Minnie Timperley Died" which is too long a title by half. This is still the Pulp that invites the listener into a nocturnal world of carnal pleasures and vices, but the glee in this self-destruction has departed. Cocker sounds like he is no longer after worldwide fame and acclaim. This is not the powerful album Pulp fans had hoped for that would rocket Pulp back into the top reaches of pop. This is an album for those who are already fans, ready to love life rather than exploit it. --Anton [top](#)

#### PUNK ROCK IS YOUR FRIEND 6 - Kung Fu Records

Number 6 features a new deal with some hardcore bands, and as they note in the flyer, "Hardcore is the new ska." That should help kill off this new hardcore movement in no time. One thing Kung Fu can be trusted on doing is at least having some fun with their releases. Maybe those aren't always the best business decisions, but I'd rather party with those guys than with any of the new hardcore dipshits. This comp is super cheap (\$4) and features some very cool unreleased songs from Audiokarate, Useless ID and Tsunami Bomb. Audiokarate is a fucking fantastic band, and this kid's got a killer growly voice. Some of these bands are doing a more "hardcore" style than I've heard them do before, notably God Awfuls, Underminded, and Getaway, so I wonder if they're taking the mickey, doing hardcore as a laugh? This collection gives you some live cuts from Kung Fu's "Show Must Go Off!" series, including Circle Jerks, Bouncing Souls and Throw Rag. Also has some crap you wouldn't catch me dead listening to like H2O and Righteous Jams. What a weird collection, still it's only 4 bucks. ---Vermin 5/11 [top](#)

#### PUNK ROCK IS YOUR FRIEND "Sampler #5" - Kung Fu

Combing the debris-strewn beaches of Kung Fu has resulted in this mixed bag of live, unreleased, demo and video hits from their archives. Interspersing the songs are audio clips from the "Cakeboy" feature film, which I know nothing about except for the fact that it sounds like a punk rock version of "This Is Spinal Tap." Some funny lines are spoken by some blowhard tour manager and hopefully the movie will elucidate who this clown is. This collection shows that KF has been expanding their sound,

featuring a Japanese version of wistful little Ozma tune alongside the Cookie Monster-with-his-leg-in-a-trap vocal stylings of Underminded. You get live tracks from Adolescents, Pistol Grip, and Guttermouth (all of which are culled from their "Show Must Go Off" series) and a couple unreleased blips from Tsunami Bomb, Vandals, and NUFAN. The best songs are by Audio Karate, although both appear on their latest LP. If nothing else, this will make you want to go get AK's record. Also included are 5 videos, the most interesting being one from the standup comic / performance artist Neil Hamburger, who is obviously of the Andy Kaufman school of comedy, creating an uber-nerd with a nasal infection as the deliverer of rude, caustic, and clever one-liners. This whole thing is kind of like a friend made it for you, with its eclectic mix of styles and comedy. --- Leeds 4/11 [top](#)

#### **PUNTO OMEGA** - Metropolis Records

The Argentinean industrial electronic duo, Punto Omega, are on a mission to "step into a new reality." Members Viator and Pilgrim, not surprisingly look like Neo and Morpheus, as does their music. I'm not sure where some of these bands would be without the genius philosophies of Keanu Reeves. Now these electro bass beats seem smart and meaningful...er. At least Punto Omega don't go for the easy kill. They don't have song after song of similar beats, made for continuous play at a club. Alas, the differing approaches of the songs will only be appreciated by the most avid fans of the genre. Noteworthy is the opening track, Marcha Hacia El Punto Omega. It combines a militaristic drum and a haunting bag pipe. It is very cinematic and although possible over-dramatic, a nice intro to the adrenaline fueled album to come. With many industrial electronic groups, the lyrics take a back seat to the grooves, and none more so than in Tempestades De Cambio. The words seem to be swallowed by the music, which is in my opinion just fine. I don't think people listen to this type of music to provoke thought, unless of course "you're heading for the end to the encounter with the Goddess." I am no expert in this genre, and Punto Omega could be THE ONE, but to me, until all of the electronics support the lyrics, Punto Omega will be a good industrial, Matrix-esque dance party. ---Evan Rude 5/11 [top](#)

#### **PURR MACHINE** - "Starry" - No Bliss Lost Records [Sept 07]

Purr Machine is an electroclash/darkwave duo consisting of a white-blonde ice queen with the coldest eyes you've ever seen, and an eyeliner, earring, goatee-wearing multi-instrumentalist dude who could be one of the German Nihilists from "The Big Lebowski." Album clangs open with some furious drum 'n' bass explosions, and then Betsy Martin's voice oozes in like velvet. Kevin Kipnis alternates between shimmering Robin Guthrie guitarwork and pounding Teutonic electro beats. The middle section of their record has a collection of slow, light tunes, completely at odds with the tone built up with the first couple of tracks. These songs are a bit watered down musically and Martin's voice only marginally rises above the generic sounds. When you get up to "Everlast," Purr Machine is back on more solid footing. Martin's voice floats like a nitrous balloon over some Depeche Modey percussion. On "Choose Your Fire" Purr Machine are going for a techno industrial attack, which has some cool drum programming and a processed vocal. I'd suggest PM decide which of the three styles of music on here is the one they really want to perform. The light songs are far too filmy to appeal to the same people who are after a more hardened electronica/industrial sound, and vice-versa. --- Leeds 6/11 [top](#)

#### **THE PURRS** - s/t - Sarathan Records [Dec 06]

Rising up out of the center of a giant red flower is Fender Jaguar, famous for its surfy sound, and an excellent weapon when using (((((reverb))))). Not a better emblem of The Purrs' sound exists. It's especially surfy and dynamic on "Loose Talk," which begins with a zesty lead straight out of the Echo & The Bunnymen fakebook. This song also has the best blend of the singer's twangy/could-give-a-toss style. He's got some Tom Verlaine in there, and some Todd Rundgren too. The Purrs' are a band with one foot in the underground 60s scene and the other in the underground 00s scene. Scene? Is there even one? Spending time with old psychedelic records and indie rock is not a must, but it will help you dig the Purrs. They've got some great Farfisa organ swirls, some tambourines, and something that is lacking in today's music world, hit them up to find out for yourself. ---Leeds 7/11 [top](#)