



Art of Anarchy

★ 1/2

Art of Anarchy

Even Scott Weiland makes a good call now and then. The mercurial frontman has already bailed on this so-called

supergroup with GN'R guitarist Bumblefoot and Disturbed's bassist. And based on the mess of modern-rock mediocrity on their boringly obvious, overly serious and instantly forgettable debut, it's no wonder.

No art, no anarchy, no super powers — and apparently, no group.

Of Monsters & Men

★★★★

Beneath the Skin

Of leopards and spots. Despite claims of reinvention — and some evolution in songwriting — the Icelandic folk-pop mythologists' second album follows in its predecessors' wake. To wit: More glimmering, swelling epics about crystals and wolves and black water, voiced in honeyed harmonies and driven by thumping floor toms. It's all decent enough, but never gets under your skin.



OF MONSTERS & MEN

Donnie Trumpet & The Social Experiment

★★★★★

Surf

Social and sonic. Despite being hyped as a new album from Chance the Rapper, the eclectic *Surf* finds the hip-hop phenom staying mostly in the shadows. At centre stage: Horn player Nico (Donnie Trumpet) Segal, casually blending jazz, soul, hip-hop, Beach Boys pop and more with the help of VIPs from J. Cole and Big Sean to Erykah Badu and Janelle Monae. Ride the wave.

Hawksley Workman

★★★★ 1/2

Old Cheetah

It's too late to change spots. So, on his umpteenth album, Can-rock eccentric Hawksley Workman continues to prowl his own meandering path. Bouncy pop and glamorous rock, psychedelia and prog, falsetto-soul and Bowie-esque art-rock; they're all in play — along with whatever strikes his fancy — and all rendered in Hawk's usual funky, free-wheeling fashion. The cat's come back.



Muse

Drones

★★★★

Matthew Bellamy always sets his sights high. Then again, so did Icarus. And look what happened to him. And unfortunately, the Muse singer-guitarist and songwriter suffers a somewhat similar fate on his band's seventh studio album *Drones*. Recording in Vancouver with superstar producer Mutt Lange, the U.K. trio's latest artfully ambitious concept-album narrative examines alienation, indoctrination, mind control, individuality and rebellion against a backdrop

album of the week

of modern-day terrorism and remote-control warfare. Topical? Sure. And, unfortunately, far more contemporary than its musical landscape, which features Muse's usual fusion of '70s prog and '80s rock, complete with stylistic and sonic echoes of everyone from Queen and Pink Floyd to U2 and (seriously) Van Halen. Admittedly, it starts off strong with

some high-velocity rockers — but loses thrust midway through thanks to too many anthemic ballads. You have to give them full points for effort, as always — but based on the execution, perhaps it's time for Bellamy and Muse to come back down to Earth.



Pete Townshend & The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

★★★★

Classic Quadrophonia

Towser goes to the symphony — and drags Jimmy with him. The Who's dynamic 1973 classic-rock opera becomes standard classical opera in the hands of Pete Townshend's partner Rachel Fuller (whose overly faithful orchestrations stress the original's soaring grandeur). London's RPO (who render them with due pomp and bombast but little urgency) and a cast led by tenor Alfie Boe (whose flawless technique lacks Roger Daltrey's existential desperation). Naturally, it's not over until the skinny kid clings to a rock in the sea. And somebody films it for a PBS special.

Jobriath

★★★★★

Jobriath A.D.: A Rock 'n' Roll Fairy Tale DVD

Once upon a time in the '70s, there was a glam-rocker named Jobriath. Openly gay, artistically flamboyant and wildly overhyped (and overshadowed) by his Svengali manager, he went from big thing to has-been in a minute and died in obscurity — only to be rediscovered, reappraised and revered by everyone from Morrissey to Joe Elliott. His sad saga is sympathetically but frankly told in this 100-minute doc via the usual archival footage and new interviews with friends, family and famous fans. Bonus fare includes 85 minutes of extended interviews and recording-studio footage; and best of all, a clear-blue vinyl LP with long-lost demos and worktapes from an unproduced, thinly veiled autobiographical musical. So at least his songs get to live happily ever after.



JOBRIATH

KEN mode

★★★★★

Success

Success has not spoiled KEN mode. But it seems to have focused them. Recorded by Steve Albini, the sixth album from Winnipeg's Juno-winning noise-rockers is a fittingly uncompromising, pointed and tightly wound affair, with singer-guitarist Jesse Matthewson's abrasive guitars and aggressive rants melding with drummer bro Shane's intricate polyrhythms. Failure is not an option.

Beautiful Bodies

★★★★

Battles

With a handle like Beautiful Bodies and a female frontwoman, you might expect this K.C. trio to be skin deep. But there's more to their debut than meets the eye. Yes, their punchy pop-punk and sleek synth-rock singles are hooky enough to lure Avril fans. But Alicia Solombrino screams them with enough rebellion and urgency to keep you from holding their name against them.

Jello Biafra & The New Orleans Raunch & Soul All-Stars

★★★★

Walk on Jindal's Splinters

It's a holiday in Louisiana. Punk provocateur Biafra finally lets his hair down and joins the party on this live recording from the 2011 New Orleans Jazz Fest. Backed by a raucous R&B band and a horn section, the DKs founder belts out oldies like *House of the Rising Son* with all the usual braying delivery and sardonic snark. It's as much fun to hear as it likely was to make.

Simply Red

★★

Big Love

You can only hold back the years for so long. Three decades after his debut — and eight years after his last Simply Red album — sole original member Mick Hucknall and his last lineup return with another soothing slate of blue-eyed soul. Sadly, generic songwriting and the undeniable weathering of Hucknall's once-pristine pipes make *Big Love* simply inessential. Hold off.

Dale Watson

★★★★ 1/2

The Truckin' Sessions Vol. 3

Can you drive backwards in third gear? Watson can. The hard-twangin' Austin honky-tonker's *Truckin' Sessions Trilogy* — grouping his 1998 and 2009 TS albums with a disc of all-new odes to the 18-wheeler's road — came out last year. If you held off (or missed out), get up to speed with this standalone release of *Vol. 3*, upgraded with one bonus cut. Crank it in your cab.

Zella Day

★★★★ 1/2

Kicker

Less *Kicker* than *Flicker*. Far from the high-stepper its title suggests, 20-year-old Arizona pop chanteuse Zella Day's major-label debut saunters a slower, sneakier path. And a darker one. Her languidly paced balladry and gangsta drama may recall Lana Del Rey, but the spacious echo and heat-shimmer twang of her home state help her put her best foot forward. She'll make your day.



ZELLA DAY



The Rolling Stones

★★★★ 1/2

Sticky Fingers: Super Deluxe Edition

It was born in a crossfire hurricane. Or as The Rolling Stones knew it: Business as usual.

"It's so difficult to pinpoint things," recalls former guitarist Mick Taylor in the excellent liner notes to the new Super Deluxe Edition of the band's 1971 landmark *Sticky Fingers*. "We were either in the studio all the time or on the road. It was a constant roller-coaster ride."

Then there was the maelstrom of madness swirling around the band in the late '60s and early '70s: The death of Brian Jones, the debacle of Altamont, guitarist Keith Richards' burgeoning drug habit. Put those in play and that roller-coaster transforms to a runaway train.

But if there's one thing the Stones had a knack for, it was their ability to pull their fat out of the fire. To channel chaos and catastrophe into catharsis. It's what earned them the title World's Greatest Rock 'n' Roll Band. And what makes *Sticky Fingers* one of their great albums. If not greatest.

Either way, it's an imposing milestone in their eventful journey. It's their first album of the '70s. Their first full LP with Taylor and without Jones. The first release on their own label. The first LP where Mick Jagger plays guitar. And the album that introduced their Tongue & Lips logo to the world — along with Andy Warhol's zippered crotch-shot cover art. It is, simply and undeniably, one of the most iconic LPs in rock.

More importantly, it is also a lean, mean hit machine, packed stem to stern with classics: *Brown Sugar*, *Sway*, *Wild Horses*, *Can't You Hear Me Knocking*, *You Gotta Move*, *Bitch*, *I Got the Blues*, *Sister Morphine*, *Dead Flowers* and *Moonlight Mile*. You can't top that. But you can celebrate it. Which is precisely what this four-disc box does.

It starts, as usual, with the remastered album, which sounds every bit as good as you remember (or better, if

Sounding off about the latest music

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John Lennon

★★★★★

Lennon Vinyl Box Set

Imagine scoring pristine vinyl copies of John Lennon's '70s and '80s catalogue for the Beatlemaniac in your life. It isn't hard to do — provided you have \$240 to shell out for the new Lennon box set. The LP counterpart to the 2010 CD version, it has the same blue-sky-on-white cover art, along with most of the same content: *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* (1970), *Imagine* (1971), *Some Time in New York City* (1972), *Mind Games* (1973), *Walls and Bridges* (1974), *Rock 'n' Roll* (1975), *Double Fantasy* (1980) and the posthumous *Milk and Honey* (1984). Naturally, everything has been pressed on 180-gram vinyl, and all the albums feature reproductions of the original packaging, right down to posters, inner sleeves, lyric sheets and *Walls and Bridges'* elaborate fold-out cover flaps. That's the good news. The bad? The box doesn't include the two discs of non-album singles and home tapes from the CD set. Nor does it have any DVDs, books or other extras. And while it includes a download card, it's only for MP3 versions of the songs. For \$240, giving buyers lossless audio shouldn't be that hard either.



A Thousand Horses

★★★★

Southernality

Much like victory, Southernality has a thousand fathers — including the Black Crowes, early '70s Rolling Stones, Allman Brothers and Lynnyrd Skynyrd. You'll hear echoes of all of them in the clanging guitars, organ swells, raspy vocals and southern-fried country-rock of this Nashville crew's debut. You won't hear a lot of originality, unfortunately. But you'll enjoy the ride anyway.

Melody Gardot

★★★★★

Currency of Man

Melody Gardot has come too far to stop. The Philadelphia singer-songwriter — whose music helped overcome life-threatening injuries after she was hit by a car in 2003 — continues her progress with this fifth album, updating and expanding her jazzy old-school foundation with more contemporary elements from slicky R&B, southern soul and gospel. Money in the bank.

box set of the week

you haven't heard recent reissues). Keef's guitar clangs and pierces. Taylor's slide shimmers. Charlie's snare cracks like a whip. Bobby Keys' hard-driving sax rides the groove. Mick's vocals are clean and crisp. All of it bursts out of your speakers. And despite being recorded everywhere from Muscle Shoals to Stargroves — and despite taking an equally meandering musical travelogue from guitar-rock to blues to southern soul to country and back again — the album, to quote Richards, "pulls itself together" into a seamless, flawless, peerless whole.

Of course, that's not all you get. If bonus tracks make you salivate like Pavlov's dog, well, there are some of those too: A raucous run through *Brown Sugar* with guitar

heroes Eric Clapton and Al Kooper; an all-acoustic *Wild Horses*; a shorter, slower *Hear Me Knocking*; a longer, looser *Bitch*; a faster, tangier *Dead Flowers*; a five-song set from London's Roundhouse; and a full 13-song concert recorded at Leeds University. None of it is particularly essential or revealing, but it's still a treat.

There's also a DVD, but as usual with Stones boxes, it's basically a commercial: Two songs from the forthcoming DVD/Blu-ray *From The Vault: The Marquee - Live in 1971*, which is due in late June (and looks awesome, if this sneak peek is anything go by).

Then there's the book: A 120-page hardback affair stylishly designed and printed on glossy stock, it chronicles the creation of the album, the cover art and logo, with extensive essay, track-by-track notes and previously unpublished photos.

Finally, there's the packaging and goodies: A set of postcards and a print, a vinyl single of *Brown Sugar* and *Wild Horses*; a poster and a freestanding cutout figure of a bandmember (I got Bill Wyman; anyone wanna trade?); and a working zipper (with tongue-logo tag of course) on the book. And everything fits snugly inside a squat, numbered box with removable lid.

Get your mitts on one and hang on.