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October 2007 Fingerish Reviews by **LMNOP®**

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Forty Marshas	Monster Magnet	Tiesto
For Your Sins	Mott The Hoople	Trolleyvox
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Erdem Helvacioğlu*	New Amsterdams*	Rick Wakeman
His Name Is Alive	New Found Glory	West Side Story
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Hundred Air	The Pearlfishers*	Zolar X
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	Barrett Story	

*Top Picks

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RATING SYSTEM:

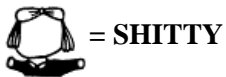
 = UNBELIEVABLY INCREDIBLE

 = EXCELLENT

 = VERY GOOD

 = GOOD

 = FAIR



[Abandoned Toys](#) - *The Witches Garden* (Independently released CD, Instrumental)

This is an intriguing album that sounds something like **Robin Guthrie's** more recent instrumental releases...if a simple melodic piano was present in the mix. **Abandoned Toys** is the solo project featuring the music of **Brett Branning** (the only other person on the album is violinist **Justin Jones** who plays on the track "Flickering Embrace"). *The Witches Garden*

is a strange and surprisingly delightful spin. Instead of creating purely electronic music or simple piano instrumentals...Branning combines the two worlds into an oddly intoxicating mixture that is simultaneously soothing and cerebral. We're not sure which side of Brett's music we like best...the tinkly childlike piano playing...or the weird haunting atmospheric? In actuality, the two seem to feed off one another surprisingly well. *Abandoned Toys* is a project delving into some new and interesting territory. Nifty mind-expanding tracks include "The Witch's Garden (Prelude)," "Where Red Shadows Slumber," and "Flowering Ashes." Neat stuff. (Rating: 5)



[Terence Blanchard](#) - *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* (CD, [Blue Note](#), Jazz)

The third full-length Blue Note release from **Terence Blanchard**. While the tunes on *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)*

are obviously centered around the horror and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina's effect on New Orleans...this CD can actually be appreciated on many different levels. The first track ("Ghost of Congo Square") left us a bit baffled...was this going to be a collection of modern urban jazz with hip hop influences? If so, we were going to yank this one out QUICK. But fortunately instead of things going the wrong way, on the second track on through to the end...*A Tale of God's Will* just got better and better *and better*. The album features a wild variety of jazz-influenced tunes that range from stark and subtle to heady classical-influenced pieces. Blanchard's music is personal, genuine, and real. Joining Terence in this endeavor were **Brice Winston**, **Aaron Parks**, **Derrick Hodge**, **Kendrick Scott**, **Zach Harmon**, and **The Northwest Sinfonia**. *A Tale of God's Will*

spins very much like a soundtrack...which is probably appropriate, seeing as how this seems to be the soundtrack to a *real-life event*. Killer classy cuts include "Levees," "In Time of Need," "The Water," "Ghost of 1927," and "Dear Mom." Of all the Katrina-related music we have heard up to this point, this is easily THE BEST. (Rating: 5+)



[Brazzaville](#) - *East LA Breeze* (CD, [Vendlus](#), Progressive soft pop)

The fifth full-length release from Los Angeles, California's **Brazzaville**. Up to this point in time we had not heard the music of **David Brown** and his associates. After spinning *East LA Breeze* a few times...we now consider ourselves instant fans. Brown writes soft, soothing, pleasing pop tunes with a slightly exotic sound. This is an amazingly consistent CD. After spinning it several times we honestly cannot pick out favorites because *all* of the tracks are superb. These songs are simultaneously light, breezy, contemplative, and rather personal. David writes lyrics that seem to come straight from his heart. But it is the songs themselves and the *delivery* that make this album such a worthwhile project. The arrangements are appropriately simple and sparse...yet always professional and polished. The vocals are light years beyond what one normally hears on a pop album. As we mentioned earlier we cannot pick favorites here...but tracks that you may find appealing include "Peach Tree," "East L.A. Breeze," "1983," "Ugly Babylon," and "Morning Light."

Highly recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



[The Capstan Shafts](#) - *Environ Maiden* (CD, [Rainbow Quartz](#), Pop)

This release surprised us...mainly because the pop experts at Rainbow Quartz usually only release albums by polished and slick pop bands...and this certainly does *not*

fit into that category. We received an earlier CD from this band awhile back and were sufficiently impressed...but at that time we had no idea how prolific **Dean Wells** (the man who is **The Capstan Shafts**) actually is. Wells writes and records tons and tons of tunes. His music and approach to recording are very similar to **Robert Pollard** (**Guided By**

Voices). Just as is the case with some of Pollard's more experimental releases, in order to appreciate Dean's music you have to accept the bad with the good. *Environ Maiden* features a whopping 29 tracks of low fidelity home-recorded pop with a decidedly British flavor. These compositions feature simple, loose, raw arrangements and Dean's subtle yet personal voice. There's a lot to take in here of course. And while some of the tracks don't quite hit the target there are others that hit the bull's eye dead on. An interesting spin to say the least. Our favorites include "Right on the Malthus," "The Origin of Rain," "Vegans and Meteors," "Low Ceilings for Bedhoppers," and "Better Get a Dream Out of This." (Rating: 4+++++)



CHARACTER

No one
Is a good judge of
Character.

(Rating: 1)



Club 8 - *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Dreaming* (CD, [Labrador](#), Soft pop)

Cool, calm, soft modern pop that falls somewhere in between the modern folk stylings of **Linda Draper** and the purely smooth addictive pop of **Kirsty MacColl**. *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Dreaming* is the sixth full-length release from **Club 8**...and it is bound to please their fans and drawn in plenty of new listeners. The band has been around since 1995. We sure hope that this will be the album that will push these folks' career up a few notches. Not because fame and money are the most important factors in music...but because we think a bigger response will encourage them to keep recording. And we *sure hope they do*. These tunes won't clobber you over the head on the first spin. These subtle, dreamy tracks get better the more familiar they become. Club 8 is vocalist **Karolina Komstedt** and songwriter **Johan Angergard**. *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Dreaming*

features twelve substantial tracks including "Jesus, Walk With Me," "Football Kids" (*god, this one sounds just like Kirsty MacColl!*), "When I Come Around," and "Where Birds Don't Fly." Exceptional stuff, recommended... (Rating: 5+++)



[Death To Our Enemies](#) - *Death To Our Enemies* (CD, [Learning Curve](#), Rock)

When we first stuck this CD in for a spin we thought...uh oh, *more generic twenty-first century thrashing*. But before tossing the disc aside we pushed skip a few times...and our initial impression quickly changed about this band. In short, there is more here than first meets the ears. **Death To Our Enemies** is the trio consisting of **Matt Coffee** (vocals, guitar), **Ken Tyborski** (bass), and **Chuck Terhark**

(drums). Although your first impression might be (like ours) to lump these guys in with thousands of other modern hard rock bands...if you will give their music a bit of time and attention you are likely to warm up to their sound. Even though the tracks on this album are hard rockers, the band infuses their music with enough poppy hooks to keep you coming back for more. The songs are basic and simple...delivered without unnecessary instruments and overdubs. As such, the songs tend to pack a real genuine punch. But the songs are the real meat here...and there are plenty of cool rockers to be found. Ten kickass tracks including "Secret Handshake," "Karate Bike," "Choke On It," and "Robot Robot." All are simultaneously intense and memorable. Neat stuff, well executed. (Rating: 5)



[Division Day](#) - *Beartrap Island* (CD, [Eenie Meenie](#), Progressive pop)

Smooth melodic pop with appropriate tidbits of technology laced in for extra spice. The folks in **Division Day** present modern pop music that is, first and foremost, pleasingly melodic. Unlike lots of other modern day bands, these guys

avoid (a) blindly thrashing away into noiseville and (b) being so cute and clever that their music becomes unlistenable.

Beartrap Island

is a nice smooth ride and yet...the songs never come across sounding overly sweet and contrived. When you consider the fact that these guys are a basic guitar band, it seems odd that we are goddamned if we can come up with appropriate comparisons for this music (?!?). Perhaps the biggest compliment we can give this CD...it to say that we played it many, many times before deciding what to say about it. Think of how many CDs you only want to hear *once*. This disc is different...and yet strangely familiar. Love the vocals. Top picks: "Beartrap Island," "To The Woods," and "Tap Tap Click Click." (Rating: 5)



Orion Rigel Dommissie - *What I Want From You Is Sweet* (CD, **Language of Stone**, Soft progressive pop)

Boy, talk about an acquired taste. We had to spin this disc over and over and over *and over* before finally coming to some conclusions about the music. Right off the bat, **Orion Rigel Dommissie's** music reminded us of a soft, ethereal, *chirpy* version of **Rasputina**. But beyond that...we were kinda confused. So we listened and listened and listened...until finally several days later we determined that we really dig this stuff. A word of warning. If you want easy, simple, familiar songs...you probably need to be listening to something else. This is not the most obtuse, weird, artsy music out there...but it is by no means standard fare. Dommissie's songs sound (like Rasputina) as if they might have been penned in another century and yet...there is something very current and modern about the music. Orion plays a variety of instruments including cello, piano, omnichord, mini-korg, and metallaphon. But her voice is what will probably make the biggest impression on listeners. We used the word already...but *chirpy most certainly* comes to mind here. Ultimately, these songs sound like what you might hear if you laid down in the middle of the forest while a string quartet was playing somewhere in the distance. Sound odd? Yeah, it's odd all right. *What I Want From You Is Sweet* may take several spins to hit the target...but when it hits, you may very well find yourself totally absorbed in this unique little musical universe... (Rating: 5+)



Thomas Dybdahl - *Science* (CD, **Rykodisc**, Progressive pop)

Norway's **Thomas Dybdahl** is going places fast...despite the fact that he's not playing the game by anyone's rules but his own. Lots of folks are apparently comparing this man's music to **Tim Buckley** and **Nick Drake**...but in our minds, Dybdahl's music is much more modern than these comparisons would suggest. The main similarity seems to be the fact that all three musicians use (or used) folk music as a diving board to other genres. The folks at Rykodisc spared no expense on this one. Superb photographs grace the front and back cover as well as the 18-page lyric booklet/insert (the photos of grass on the inside merge beautifully with Ryko's trademark green jewel case). But music is the main course here...and, not surprisingly, Dybdahl once again hits the target dead on. This fellow writes tunes that range from soft and soothing to strangely personal and occasionally slightly spooky ("Still My Body Aches" resonates with incredible lyrics and sounds...you have to hear this one to believe it). *Science* is not an easy album that can be completely digested on the first spin. These tracks have unusual depth. Although on the surface there is plenty to enjoy here...when you begin digging a bit deeper into this man's music, you really begin to appreciate it. Plenty of top notch songs here including "Something Real," "No One Would Ever Know" (a *particularly appealing* tune), "This Year," and "B A Part." This is an easy TOP PICK for October 2007. Highly recommended. (Rating: 6)



Empire State Observatories - *Empire State Observatories* (CD-R, **Impko**, Noise)

Empire State Observatories is the one man project consisting of **Sean Curley** who some folks may remember as a member of the crazy underground 1990s pop group **The Wallmen**. But whereas The Wallmen played out-of-bounds oddball pop...this project features pure noise indulgence. This five track album contains droning sounds and accidental noise that most people would consider to be non-music. But as any thinking individual knows...in reality *anything* can be music as long as it is presented as such. This type of release is very difficult to describe and even more difficult to rate because of the nature of the recordings. We'd bet that Sean would find himself very comfortable with the roster of artists on Georgia's Blossoming Noise label. Odd, moody, and slightly surreal stuff... (Not Rated)

FACE OF THE INTERNET

The best thing
About the internet
Is that it makes it possible
To communicate with everyone
Under the sun without ever
Having to look at their
Ugly sickening
Faces.

(Rating: 1)



FART ABOUT

Assholes fart about
Freedom because
They don't know
What else to
Fart about.

(Rating: 1)



Felix Da Housecat - *Virgo Blaktro & The Movie Disco* (CD, [Netwerk](#), Dance/techno/disco)

A retrospective album that seems to possibly forge the way for some interesting future adventures. Chicago's **Felix Da Housecat** has really outdone himself with this one...citing major influences to be **Parliament, Sly and The Family Stone, Prince, George Michael, and Pet Shop Boys** (we would add **Kraftwerk** to the list as well). On *Virgo Blaktro & The Movie Disco*, Housecat has managed to effectively capture the pure and simple vibrations of techno dance music from the 1970s and 1980s. This groovy, feelgood album features sixteen light, catchy, danceable underground hits...all of which were recorded with precise attention to detail. Many of these tracks had us scratching our heads...haven't we heard this one *before...?* Or isn't *that one* a cover of an old song...? To be certain, Da Housecat has so effectively captured this period in musical history that you may very well be thinking that this is a collection of cover tunes. But the best part is...*it ain't*. Smooth, cool cuts include "Movie Disco," "Blaktro Man," "It's Your Move," "Pretty Girls Don't Dance," and "Tweak." (Rating: 5+)



FINGERS

Smell your fingers.
Think of all the things that
Your fingers have touched.
Look at your fingers.
Think of all the things that

Your fingers have done.

Think of all the evil things
You have done with your fingers.
Think of all the horrible crimes
That you have committed
With your fingers.

Now close your eyes and dream.

Your fingers are
Extensions of the
Devil that lives
Inside your
Soul.

(Rating: 1)



Forty Marshas - *Forty Marshas* (CD, [Beatville](#),???)

Forty Marshas

is an odd project. So much so that we're not even going to try to rate or categorize it. The band was created by **Mike Malinin** who is the drummer for the **Goo Goo Dolls**. Goo Goo fans should be forewarned. If you think you're going to get modern buzzsaw pop here, think again. Malinin and his associates (all of whom are appropriately given the first name "Marsha" for this album) have recorded a batch of tunes that is schizophrenic to say the least. The songs range from ambient to experimental noise to pop to screamer rock to death metal. From the sounds we're hearing on this l'il sucker, it sounds like the folks involved had a great time recording this. They seem to have been creating for the pure fun of it. We can usually rate things no matter what the style of music. But because of the wide range of material here...we just cannot decide on a number here (?). We will end by saying that tracks like "God Is An Anchorman," "Screaming At Shadows," "Bucket of Fire," and "A Wasted Life Is Not Worth Remembering (Advice From the 40)" are definitely intriguing...and almost always unpredictable... (Not Rated)

FOR YOUR SINS

Jesus dyed his hair
For your sins.
Jesus knitted a lovely little white frock
For your sins.
Jesus coughed up a big greasy furball that had been irritating him for weeks
For your sins.
Jesus crushed up a bump and snorted it
For your sins.

(Rating: 1)



Gentle Giant - *Live in Santa Monica 1975* (CD, **Glasshouse** / [Voiceprint](#), Progressive pop/rock/jazz)

The bad news...is that the sound quality on this CD is just *not that great*. But the good news...is that this CD effectively

captures the essential magic of one of our favorite British progressive bands from the 1970s...**Gentle Giant**. While other bands experienced a far greater degree of commercial and critical success (**Genesis, Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer**), the guys in Gentle Giant were actually much more interesting and entertaining than most of their contemporaries. This disc captures the band at the peak of their game playing live in 1975 in Santa Monica, California (plus two additional tracks from a Dallas, Texas concert in 1977). Because of the questionable sound quality, we cannot recommend *Live in Santa Monica 1975* to folks who are unfamiliar with Gentle Giant. Much better starting points would be *Acquiring the Taste*, *Three Friends*, *Octopus*, or *The Power and the Glory*. But for folks (like us) who have long been fans of this criminally overlooked band, this album offers an intriguing glimpse of what they sounded like in concert. Hard to rate this one...but we can end this by saying that we will always be big fans of incredibly complex songs like "Cogs in Cogs," "Proclamation," "So Sincere," and "Advent of Panurge." When will a *comprehensive Gentle Giant box set* see the light of day? When? *WHEN?????!!!* (Not Rated)

HAVE A NICE LITTLE DAY

Have a nice little hour
 And a nice little day
 And a nice little week
 Because next month you will be
 Diagnosed with a fatal
 Disease that has no
 Cure.

(Rating: 1)



[Erdem Helvacioğlu](#) - *Altered Realities* (CD, **New Albion**, Electronic/instrumental/progressive)

Electronic artists are a dime a dozen these days...and most of them are either continually regurgitating **Brian Eno's** *Music for Airports* for the millionth time...or their music is so silly and *blippity-bloopy* that you can only listen to it once or twice. Accordingly and as a matter of fact, the second album from Turkey's **Erdem Helvacioğlu** is a refreshing blast of unique electronic air. *Altered Realities*

is an appropriate title for this album as it features seven lengthy tunes recorded in real time (!) that center around the sounds created by an Ovation acoustic guitar. But those who might be expecting new age guitar instrumentals will be *very surprised*

by the sounds presented here. Instead of going for a totally ambient sound...or a purely musical approach...Helvacioğlu effectively combines both worlds into one slightly symphonic electronic otherworldly drone that is bewildering and, at times, rather magnificent. A great deal of time was obviously spent tweaking these tunes to perfection. This is easily one of the best electronic albums we have heard thus far this year. Strange tracks like "Bridge to Horizon," "Dreaming On a Blind Saddle," and "Ebony Remains" are absolutely essential listening. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



[His Name Is Alive](#) - *Xmmer* (CD, **Silver Mountain Media**, Progressive pop)

We've been following this band's obtuse career path for many years now. We have learned that even though you never know exactly *what* to expect from one **His Name Is Alive** album to the next...you can always be assured of a cool and unusual ride. That said, this is definitely *not* the most ground breaking album this group has released. *Xmmer* is much more of a straightforward pop album...not a bad thing, but just not what we were expecting. In terms of pop music, some of this stuff is rather interesting and different. Other tracks...sound very much like a lot of *other* pop bands that we heard over the past few years. Although by no means a bad album, *Xmmer* is...up to this point in time...our least favorite His Name Is Alive disc. Not a big deal...because we feel certain that when the next CD comes out we will once again be transfixed and mesmerized... (Rating: 4+++)



[Abigail Hopkins](#) - *Blue Satin Alley* (CD, [Possessed Records Ltd.](#), Folk/soft pop)

The second full-length release from Welsh singer-songwriter **Abigail Hopkins**. *Blue Satin Alley* is a smooth, intricate collection of acoustic folk/pop compositions that focus on Abigail's soft and soothing vocals. She presents her songs simply and without unnecessary fanfare. The arrangements are purposely sparse...allowing listeners to focus on the melodies and lyrics. Guitarist **Keith Osborne**

provides some really cool, warm sounds on these tracks. We can hear traces of a variety of other artists in this music...including but not limited to **Patti Smith** and **Suzanne Vega**...and even *babysue* favorite **Lisa Germano** at times. What impresses us most about this album is the substance that is lurking beneath the surface. Tracks that at first seem to be simple, soft, folky pop...are in actuality rather depth and involved. Twelve neat tracks here including "Butterfly," "In From the Sea," "Crow Wire," "Reminds Me of You," and "Metamorph." Beautiful stuff... (Rating: 5+)



Hundred Air - *Make Out City* (CD, [Fractured Discs](#), Pop)

Is an eight song CD an *EP*...or is it a *full-length release*...? Does *anybody really know* which one it is...? While we ponder this most important point, onto the issue at hand... **Hundred Air** is the new project driven by the songwriting skills of **Adam Price** who was formerly in the bands **Mayflies USA** and **The Comas** and who also currently plays bass with **Work Clothes**. *Make Out City*

is an instantly pleasing collection of mid-tempo pop with the main focus being lyrics and vocal melodies. In trying to describe the sound of these tunes, we can't resist extracting a line from Fractured Discs' own press release: "*Hundred Air doesn't necessarily sound like a lot of other bands, but they draw inspiration from many.*" That seems to sum up this band's sound rather well. We can hear traces of lots of other bands in these tunes and yet...Hundred Air manages to avoid sounding too much like any one artist or band in particular. The arrangements are appropriately sparse...which allow the vocals to shine through loud and clear. And that is fortunate...because Price has a cool, understated, somewhat deep voice that really makes these tune shine. Cool hummable cuts include "Feet Don't Fail Me Now," "All the Lights Are On," "Soaking In It," and "Hold On a Minute." (Rating: 5+)



[Shuyler Jansen](#) - *Today's Remains* (CD, [Black Hen Music](#), Pop)

Really cool and effective soft pop laced with hints of Americana, bluegrass, and country and western. **Shuyler Jansen** has already experienced a good deal of success with his roots rock band **Old Reliable**...but he is also now releasing solo albums as well. *Today's Remains*

is the second full-length release from this remarkably talented fellow. The album resonates with pure sincerity and timeless melodies. Although his music bears little resemblance to either, Jansen's overall approach reminds us of artists like **Neil Young** and **Richard Thompson**...talented songwriters who forged their own career paths and succeeded.

Remains

was recorded using traditional instruments. The arrangements are sparse and open...allowing listeners to focus on Shuyler's calm and cool vocals. The title track bears a strange resemblance to **Don McLean**'s "Vincent"...but that is where the similarities end. On the first listen we found this CD to be pleasant enough...but ten or twenty spins later we found ourselves completely immersed in Shuyler's highly stylized soft pop. Wonderfully moody cuts include "Pegasus," "Windswept," "Jealous Girl," and "Chief." An obvious TOP PICK. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



[Japancakes](#) - *Giving Machines* (CD, [Darla](#), Instrumental)

We've said this before but we'll say it again. We really have to admire instrumental bands. Writing and recording instrumentals requires a great deal of time and energy...and in almost all cases, the potential for fame and/or monetary rewards is minimal at best. As a result, most instrumental bands are driven purely by the desire to create. Such must surely be the case with Athens, Georgia's **Japancakes**. We haven't heard anything from this band since we covered their *If I Could See Dallas* album way back in November 1999. Obviously *a lot* has changed since that time. The band's

recording process is interesting. Instead of playing together during recording sessions, each player records his or her part individually. The pieces are then mixed after each person has completed his or her contribution to the composition. The first thing that stuck us about *Giving Machines*...is that it has a really big, rich sound. Spacious and exotic, these compositions are slow and methodical...rather moody and ultimately soothing. The tunes feature intricately interwoven guitar, bass, keyboards, and pedal steel guitar. In addition to original compositions, this album also includes an interesting cover of **The Cocteau Twins'** "Heaven or Las Vegas." Neat stuff, executed to perfection. (Rating: 5+)



JUMP ROPE

Goddamn your parents.
 Goddamn your school.
 Goddamn your job.
 Goddamn your hobbies.
 Goddamn your belongings.
 Goddamn your clothes.
 Goddamn your stupid goddamn
 Jump rope.

(Rating: 1)



[Kingsbury](#) - *The Great Compromise* (CD, **Post Records**, Progressive pop)

Soft, moody, progressive, and smart. The folks in Orlando, Florida's Kingsbury previously released two EPs (*This Place Is Coming Down* and *The Open Sea*)...but this is their first full-length album. Instead of taking the obvious road to success (i.e., writing and recording catchy pop/rock)...these folks are taking the back roads in their musical quest. Not only with their music...but also in terms of geographics. *The Great Compromise* is an appropriate title for this album, as it contains songs that are somewhat accessible and catchy and yet...the songs are mainly subtle, odd creations born out of artistic integrity. Casual listeners may find this band's music too odd for their tastes...but our guess is that the folks in this band want to create quality music rather than just churn out the kind of shallow crap most people want to hear. We can't help but be impressed by the band's choices of venues and cities when they tour. Instead of picking only the obvious, ultra cool clubs and cities to play...they seem to be willing to play just about any time and at any place that they can. Their grass roots approach will probably pay off. Our guess is that, once underground musicians and fans hear this stuff, the members of Kingsbury will be well on their way to becoming an underground favorite. Ten beautifully concocted tracks here including "Corpse," "Leave Me Be," "Peninsula," and "The City and the Sea." Recommended for fans of **Starflyer 59**. (Rating: 5+)



[The Last Goodnight](#) - *Poison Kiss* (CD, **Virgin**, Pop)

The guys in Enfield, Connecticut's **The Last Goodnight** certainly seem poised for success. Their debut album has been released by Virgin, they've got a slick and commercial sound, and they're touring supporting *American Idol* loser **Elliot Yamin**. Okay, we won't hold *that* against them but as you might guess...we *cannot stand* Yamin. He looks and sounds just horrible (even *with*

the new teeth) and needs to be locked up in a closet permanently. If the tour was being handled correctly...Elliot would be opening up for The Last Goodnight instead of the other way around. *Poison Kiss* is, as one might expect, an extremely glossy collection of melodic pop featuring tons and tons of overdubs. The band's slightly soulful catchy pop should immediately catch on with music fans...particularly the ladies. Some of the tunes on this album sound slightly like **Ben Folds**...but the sound is much bigger and more epic in nature. There are some good songs here to be certain..."Back Where We Belong," "This Is the Sound," "Return To Me," and "Push Me Away" all sound like hits to us.

The only problem we see for these guys at this point is that their recorded sound is so polished and slick...that their own personality sometimes seems to get lost in all the money and technology. We sure hope the band can tone down the production on the next album...which would allow listeners to focus more on the songs themselves. They've got the goods...now they just need a bit of tweaking with the *delivery*... (Rating: 4+)



[Nathan Lawr and the Minotaurs](#) - *A Sea of Tiny Lights* (Independently released CD, Pop)

Nice melodic organic pop that sometimes recalls **The Kinks** during their *Muswell Hillbillies / Everybody's In Showbiz* period. **Nathan Lawr** started out playing drums for other bands before embarking on his solo career. *A Sea of Tiny Lights* is his third full-length release. The album features musical support from The Minotaurs which consists of **Paul Aucoin, Evan Clarke, Kristian Galberg, Shaw-Han Liem, Daive MacKinnon, Kate Maki, and Simon Osborne**. Nathan's tunes are impressively personal and unpretentious. His songs may not clobber you over the skull on the first listen...but with time these songs are likely to make their way into your subconsciousness. We particularly like his laidback vocal style. So many twenty-first century artists are trying way, way, *way too hard* to make their point. As a result, folks like Lawr who just sing and don't push themselves...come off sounding much more genuine and real in the big scheme of things. Cool hummable tracks include "Righteous Heart," "If You Don't Believe Me," "That Moment," and "Woodpile." Very nice from start to finish... (Rating: 5)



[Eric Layer](#) - *Fall* (Independently released CD, Progressive pop)

The first solo album from **Eric Layer** who also plays in the bands **Hecuba** and **Mountain Party** and who previously played in **Setting Sun** and worked with the performance group **Piece of Meat Theatre**. *Fall* presents ten tracks, most of which are moody, atmospheric slow pop with excellent harmony vocals. The album was recorded almost entirely by Layer...but if you're thinking you're going to hear that "one-man-band" sound here you would be completely wrong. Layer's music is hazy and swirls beneath the surface. Instead of presenting obvious and easy pop, he records songs that are subtle and just slightly odd. Only on one song ("Yellow Moon") does the volume cause things to rumble a bit. This is a curious album that is bound to be interpreted hundreds of different ways...and that is, perhaps, the real beauty of the music. Puzzling mental cuts include "The Fall," "Lovely Day" (our favorite), "Stoke the Fire," and "Stupid Dreams." Intriguing. (Rating: 4+++++)



[Alvin Lee](#) - *Saguitar* (CD, [Rainman](#), Blues/rock/pop)

While many may continue to think of **Alvin Lee** as the leader of **Ten Years After**...in actuality, such a limited view of this British man's career is misleading because he has done *so much more* during the course of his forty-plus-year career. Suffice to say...if you ever loved Alvin's loose, groovy, jaw-dropping guitar playing...you are likely to get a charge out of hearing his latest release, *Saguitar*. The album features fourteen new tunes all of which were penned by Lee. Folks that might be worried about an older fellows' ability to rock out need not be concerned. *Saguitar* finds Mr. Lee still sounding vital and energized. His guitar playing is as stylized as ever and even his vocals still sound great. Folks with limited viewpoints who still think Lee was nothing more than the leader of Ten Years After...would be well-advised to take a glance at his continually expanding discography. This CD provides obvious reasons why Alvin Lee's music remains vital and credible in the twenty-first century. Top notch bluesy rockers include "Anytime U Want Me," "It's Time to Play," "Memphis," "Education," and "Rocking Rendezvous." (Rating: 5+)



LEECHES

Friends are always great
Until you get to know them well

At which point they become
Nothing more than
Selfish, needy
Leeches.

(Rating: 1)



THE LOVE YOU SAVE

Stop the love you save
May be your own filthy
Crusted vomit stuck
On the bottom of the
Floor next to the
Toilet.

(Rating: 1)



Lucinda Black Bear - *'Capo My Heart' and Other Bear Songs* (CD, **Eastern Spurs**, Progressive pop)

So many bands lately with the word "bear" in their name...and the odd part is that *none of them* are groups of fat hairy guys (!?!). Hey, what *gives?* Bear bands, bear bands, everywhere...and not a stitch of homosexual fur. **Lucinda Black Bear** is a new band led by **Christian Gibbs**. There's no denying that the songs on *'Capo My Heart' and Other Bear Songs* bear a strong resemblance to early **Neil Young**...the vocals are particularly similar. But instead of merely rehashing an old sound and style...Gibbs and his associates breathe new life into plaintive, yearning, soft pop. In addition to Christian, this band consists of **Mike Cohen** (bass), **Kristin Hammer** (drums), **Chad Hammer** (cello), and **Clare Burson**

(violin). The soft, dreamy tracks on this album sound mighty fine indeed (excellent sound quality throughout)...particularly after you've heard them a half dozen times or more. Instead of going for easy, predictable pop...the folks in Lucinda Black Bear present mature modern music for smart listeners. Cool groovy cuts here include "Kites," "Capo My Heart," "You Got It Blue," and "Here I Am." We really like the way this album ends with the tripped out strings on "Hibernation Song (Blue It Got You)"...really *neat*. (Rating: 5++)



Lust, Caution - *Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (CD, **Decca**, Soundtrack)

Of all the fine soundtrack releases we have received from the fine folks at New York's CineMedia Promotions, this is easily our favorite so far. The last time we remember being so affected by a soundtrack was when we saw (and heard) *The Piano* many years ago. Like the soundtrack to that film, *Lust, Caution* features some wonderfully serious and moving music that affects the mind and soul. Folks who aren't familiar with this film may be interested to know that this is the follow-up to *Brokeback Mountain* (director **Ang Lee**'s controversial gay cowboy movie). The music for *Lust, Caution* was created by French composer **Alexandre Desplat**. This CD features a total of 24 tracks, most of which alternate between straightforward piano pieces and slow, moving, subdued orchestral arrangements. Extraordinarily effective and moving, these compositions truly evoke ideas and intense personal feelings in the mind of the listener. Serious stuff here...so if you're not in the mood for it, you may want to be forewarned. Beautiful, intoxicating cuts include "Lust, Caution," "Streets of Shanghai," "The End of Innocence," "Check Point," and "An Empty Bed." Immaculately recorded with acute attention to detail. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



[Lycia](#) - *Cold* (CD, [Silber](#), Progressive pop)

Cold is the latest in a series of **Lycia**

reissues offered by Raleigh, North Carolina's Silber label. According to the press release that accompanied this CD, *Cold* has apparently been the most well-received album from this band...having already been embraced by Goth folks and space music freaks. This album is dark and spacey...and the instruments are drenched in reverb and other effects. The voices seem to have been added at the end of the recording process...often sounding more like background effects than traditional lead vocals. Folks who found **The Cocteau Twins** too accessible and poppy will probably find Lycia much more to their liking. Odd, moody, and slightly surreal...*Cold* is a dark and peculiar album full of ambient washes and cool tripped out guitars. Nine cuts here including "Frozen," "Colder," "Drifting," and "Polaris." (Rating: 5)



[Maxtone Four](#) - *Hey Hey Do It Anyway* (CD, **Maximum Tone Fidelity Records**, Pop)

A short album...but what it lacks in length it more than makes up for in substance. *Hey Hey Do It Anyway* is a super cool, pure feelgood album full of insanely catchy tunes. After making their initial splash, this St. Louis band apparently took a bit of a break before getting down to recording this album (the Spanish phrase on the front cover translates to "Sick? No, Tired."). Taking a break must've been the right choice at the right time...as the tracks on this album sound anything *but* tired. The band crams eleven songs onto this short album that clocks in at just over 30 minutes. They deliver their songs with direct intent...never allowing fluff and unnecessary elements to clutter the mix. Smart guitars combine with excellent vocals and a propulsive rhythm section...creating a nice whirlwind of pure pop energy. Cool tracks include "Just Say I Know," "Melody Girl," "Bob," and "OK You Go First." This album is bound to be a favorite among pop fans all over the world. (Rating: 5+)



[Mist and Mast](#) - *Mist and Mast* (Independently released CD, Progressive pop)

Mist and Mast is the new project created by **Jason Lakis** who had previously released three albums under the name **The Red Thread**

(on the Badman Recording Co. label). This is a mostly one man project recorded by Jason with the exception of a couple of keyboard and guitar parts provided by others. Our first reaction to Mist and Mast...is that this music seems a good deal more focused than the last couple of Red Thread albums that we heard. And that is a good thing...because it means Jason is allowing his music to take him into new and different territories. This self-titled album features nine tracks of thoughtful, slightly odd progressive pop. The soft, subdued vocals work remarkably well within the framework of these intricately arranged tunes. This doesn't sound like an album created to sell units...but rather an artistic creation in which Lakis is simply transferring his thoughts and feelings into music. Pensive, thoughtful cuts include "Turn Into the Turn," "Campfire Went Out," "Glass Tiles," and "Price of Fevers." Plenty of neat stuff here, it'll be interesting to see where Jason heads with the next Mist and Mast release... (Rating: 5)



[Mohawk Lodge](#) - *Wildfires* (CD, **White Whale**, Pop)

Good mid-tempo guitar rock. **Mohawk Lodge** vocalist/guitarist **Ryder Havdale** has a voice that is similar in many ways to **J. Mascis (Dinosaur Jr)**...mainly because his singing is rather loose and he wavers on and off key a lot. Add in hummable songs that are reminiscent of 1970s and 1980s **Neil Young**...and you have an album that is entertaining and extremely unpretentious. We have always been nuts about neat guitars...and there are *tons* of neat guitar riffs threaded throughout *Wildfires*. Because this band's sound and image are so seemingly void of hooks and gimmicks...it'll be interesting to see how folks react. The guys in Mohawk Lodge could either be dismissed as just one of ten thousand guitar bands currently roaming the planet...or instantly catapulted into fame if super hipsters latch onto them. We hope these guys get the recognition they deserve...because their music is genuinely real and has *substance*. Nifty cuts include "Hard Times," "Everybody's On Fire," "Calm Down," and "Rising Sun." (Rating: 4+++++)



Monster Magnet - *4-Way Diablo* (CD, [SPV USA](#), Rock)

The first new studio album in three years from the band that spawned thousands of eBay sales of the once popular Wham-O red magnet from the 1960s. After his well-publicized drug problems that culminated in an overdose during a 2006 tour of Europe, **Monster Magnet** leader **Dave Wyndorf** seems bound and determined to get back on track. *4-Way Diablo*

is a bit of a departure for the band, as these tunes were mainly recorded live with only minimal overdubs added to clean things up. As such, this album probably captures the live sound of the band better than any of their previous studio albums. These tunes find the band rocking hard and heavy...but this time around the tunes seem a bit more loose and bluesy than on previous releases. Wyndorf's bandmates provide a super solid foundation here (**Ed Mundell** on guitar, **Bob Pantella** on drums, and **Jim Baglino** on bass). It will be interesting to see whether or not the band's fans will follow along at this point. Will these guys see an instant resurgence of their immense popularity from the 1990s? Or will they be neglected as their original fans have gotten older and younger listeners aren't that familiar with the band? Whatever the case...Monster Magnet continues to provide good, solid, hard tunes with staying power. Cool rockers include "Wall of Fire," "Blow Your Mind," an interesting cover of **The Rolling Stones'** "2000 Lightyears From Home," and "A Thousand Stars." (Rating: 5)



Mott The Hoople - *Fairfield Halls, Live 1970* (CD, [Angel Air](#), Rock)

When we first saw this CD we were thinking...*Mott The Hoople live...GREAT...but the sound quality is gonna really SUCK*. Ladies and gentlemen, we ain't afraid to admit it when we are wrong. And BOY were we wrong about this one. *Fairfield Halls, Live 1970*

captures the cool guys in Mott before they became popsters. As a result, these early live recordings present the band in all their early rocking glory. At this stage of the game the band consisted of **Ian Hunter**, **Mick Ralphs**, **Overend Watts**, **Verden Allen**, and **Dave Griffin**. The disc is divided into two sections. The first seven tracks (which include rousing versions of "Ohio" and "You Really Got Me") was recorded September 13, 1970 at Fairfield Halls in Croyden, England. The remaining five bonus tracks were taken from a concert on February 16, 1971 at The Konserthuset in Stockholm, Sweden. Listeners who only know the band's later pop tracks like "All The Young Dudes" and "All The Way From Memphis" may very well be surprised at the punch and muscle of early Mott. This CD is a great reminder of how hard these guys could actually rock. Essential for fans of the band. (Rating: 5++)



mwvm - *Rotations* (CD, [Silber](#), Electronic)

Rotations

features the kind of classy, odd ambient stuff that has made the Silber label a household name among a small yet devoted group of people around the globe. **mwvm** (none of the letters are capitalized) is the solo project created by **Michael Walton**

who resides in County Durham in the United Kingdom. Walton's music consists of all-instrumental electronics...slow, methodical, and dreamy in nature. The guitar playing on this album is rather unusual in that it is very hard to actually recognize the guitars. Much of this music is so soft and subtle...that it is rather difficult to describe. This is the sort of music that is best used to create odd, surreal moods in your living environment. Tired of bopping around to the latest catchy pop band? Or have you found yourself grinding your teeth away once too often after too many loud blasts of harsh metal? If so take a chill pill...put on *Rotations*...and allow yourself to float away on a serene cloud of mental fluidity. Wonderful sounding rich stuff...far too peculiar for the casual listener. Recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



Myracle Brah - *Can You Hear the Myracle Brah?* (CD, [Rainbow Quartz](#), Pop)

Another remarkably satisfying album from Baltimore, Maryland's **Myracle Brah**. This guitar pop band is driven by the songwriting talents of **Andy Bopp**...a fellow with an uncanny knack for writing catchy and absorbing melodies. On this

album, Bopp is aided by drummer **Greg Schroeder** and back up vocalist **Chad Hopkins**. *Can You Hear the Myracle Brah?*

features fifteen smart tracks of intriguing, well-crafted pop. The guitars are loud and up front in the mix...and the vocals are urgent and direct. Unlike many pure pop bands, Andy and his pals manage to retain a certain raw, roughness that makes the music really rock. The album features a nice mix of rockers and mid-tempo pop...all of which feature Andy's excellent, focused vocals. Catchy keepers include "No More Words," "Tran Sister," "Big Kids Wanna Rock," "A Traveling Song," and "You're My Heaven." Great stuff. (Rating: 5)



New Amsterdams - *At the Foot of My Rival* (CD, **Curb Appeal**, Pop)

The **New Amsterdams'** **Matt Pryor** is a man whose music appeals to almost *everyone*. His tunes are honest and creative enough to please fans of the underground, commercial enough for folks who like radio-friendly music, and smart enough for folks who need a little artsy flavor in their pop. *At the Foot of My Rival* continues in the same general vein as Matt's previous releases. These pensive, melodic compositions have plenty of sticking power...and yet they are delivered with such casual restraint that you almost forget how effective the songs really are (!). Most artists with such a surging word-of-mouth buzz aren't worthy of all the jibber jabbering...but Pryor is a different sort of animal. While he certainly manages to please writers and reviewers and the ultra-hipsters of the world...his music is personal and real enough to affect just about anyone who truly loves great pop. This fourteen song album reverberates with *pure feelgood energy*. Killer cuts include "Revenge," "Without A Sound (Eleanor)" (a real standout track), "Story Like A Scar," and "The Blood on the Floor." Highly recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



New Found Glory - *From the Screen to Your Stereo Part II* (CD, **Drive-Thru**, Pop/rock)

Despite the fact that the guys in **New Found Glory** have been at it for a decade now...the tunes on *From the Screen to Your Stereo Part II*

spark from the speakers with the youthful excitement of a band that has just learned how to play. The album features eleven cover tunes...but if you're expecting generic and conventional rehashing, think again. These guys recharge the tunes they cover...reinventing them with their own unique power pop possibilities. This album has a nice, big, thick polished sound...and yet the band's raw power still manages to come across loud and clear. Catchy, frantic buzzsaw tunes include "Kiss Me," "It Ain't Me Babe" (this one is particularly nice), "The King of Wishful Thinking," "Iris," and "Head Over Heels." Top notch vocals from start to finish. These guys sure are sounding *super tight* these days... (Rating: 5)



NIGHTMARES

When we are young
We have dreams.
When we are old
We have dreams.
But in between
We have nothing but
Nightmares.

(Rating: 1)



The Pearlfishers - *Up With the Larks* (CD, **Marina**, Pop)

Glasgow, Scotland's **The Pearlfishers**

return with another remarkable collection of intelligent modern pop. Over the past few years band mainman **David Scott** has become a favorite among pop fans all over the world. His songs are so upbeat and optimistic that they may very well drive some people up the wall. But here in *babysue*land, we tend to admire people who can create truly positive music...particularly in light of the depressing state of humanity in the twenty-first century. *Up With the Larks* is a wonderfully uplifting collection of bright, breezy, classic pop songs. Although his voice is very different from either, Scott's tunes sound something like a cross between **Elvis Costello** and **Ben Folds**. His music is extremely accessible and radio-friendly and yet...it somehow never comes across sounding contrived and artificial. It is probably this man's inner spirit that makes his music so real and genuine. If you visit his web site (link above) you will almost certainly get the immediate impression that David is a sincere, genuine fellow who truly enjoys making music. *Larks* is yet another direct hit featuring twelve classy keepers including "Send Me a Letter," "London's In Love" (a particularly wonderful tune), "Fighting Fire With Flowers," and "I Just See the Rainbow." Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



The Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett Story (Double DVD, Zeit Media / [MVD Visual](#), Documentary)

Documentaries about rock stars and bands can quickly become very tedious, pretentious, and unbearable. When we saw the cheesy cover of **The Pink Floyd and Syd Barrett Story** we were prepared for the *worst*. Oddly enough...this DVD turned out to be a thoroughly entertaining and enlightening experience. Although lots of folks in the twenty-first century are very familiar with Pink Floyd...most of them have probably heard very little (if any at all) of the band's original recordings with Syd Barrett. And that is very sad because, as this documentary clearly illustrates, Barrett truly was the man with the talent and vision. Through the use of various snippets of archival footage and interviews with those who knew him, the narrator paints a vivid and real picture of the man whose voice and personality have unfortunately become muddled and lost over the years. Now that he has passed away, having a documentary that tells his story is nothing short of fantastic. This DVD sheds light on one obvious fact. Pink Floyd *with* Syd Barrett was a wonderfully inventive and incredible band. Pink Floyd *without*

Syd Barrett...is just another band churning out songs for money. While the members of the band continue to publicly moan on and on about how tragic their loss was...one can't help but wonder. After all, some of the band's most successful ventures (*Wish You Were Here*, *The Wall*) seem to have capitalized on Barrett. The one person who comes off seeming genuine and sincere here is **Robyn Hitchcock**...the one individual who dares to dispute the idea that Barrett's high point was with the band. Like Robyn, we feel that Syd's solo recordings were every bit as good...if not far better. And certainly light years more credible than later Pink Floyd recordings. We came away from this...wanting to hear more Syd Barrett...and wanting to hear absolutely *nothing*

that the band recorded after his departure. Perhaps the surviving band members are sincere in their fond memories of their deceased friend...we certainly don't know for sure. But with so much money to be made from the situation, one just has to *wonder*. Whether you like Pink Floyd or not, if you are into the history of rock music you really need to see this... (Rating: 5)



PLANT ABUSE

Abuse a plant.
Cut it.
Burn it.
Threaten it and
Rape it.

(Rating: 1)



Dick Prall - *Weightless* (CD, [Authentic](#), Pop)

The really cool cover art first caught our attention with this one...a neat blurry photograph with **Dick Prall's** face neatly divided in half but not quite properly aligned. But it was ultimately the songs that caused us to devote our attention to *Weightless*. This is the fourth full-length release from Prall. After hearing this, it's no wonder that so many folks are beginning to notice this young man's music. This guy doesn't toss off underground noise as art nor does he play the kind of mindless twenty-first century synth pop dribble that has become so popular with the mindless masses. Instead, Dick writes and records smart, pensive, articulate pop that recalls some of the truly great artists from decades past (we can hear definite traces of **Cat Stevens** and even **Thin Lizard Dawn** at times). His guitar pop tunes are arranged to perfection and incorporate some precise and totally appropriate strings at times. *Weightless* is one of those rare releases that manages to be simultaneously accessible while still retaining artistic integrity. Oh...and we almost forgot to mention *the voice*. Dick has a really great voice that soars and/or whispers...depending on the mood and need of each song. Cool pop cuts include "Halfway to Hollywood," "Long Play," "Boulevard," and "Devils." Well done. (Rating: 5+)



Qui - *Love's Miracle* (CD, [Ipecac](#), Rock)

The cover of this CD is brilliant. On first glance, it appears to be a hit-ridden schmaltzy commercial album about love. But look again...and you realize that the three band members are standing over what appears to be a dead woman's body in the grass. **Qui** is the trio of **David Yow**, **Paul Christensen**, and **Matt Cronk**. As anyone familiar with Yow would expect, this is one *crazy*

album. The band whips out nine harsh, nasty tracks for underground rock fans that feature hard rhythms, loopy wild guitar, and Yow's unpredictable vocals. The odd, obtuse tunes on this album are deceptively complex. Instead of hashing out noise as music as many twenty-first century bands are prone to do, these guys present their remarkably intelligent oddball rock tunes with precision and style. Who does this sound like...? Hard to say, really... But we are finding that the more we play this one...the better it sounds. Bizarre rock cuts include "Apartment," "Today, Gestation," "New Orleans," a strange cover of "Willie the Pimp," and "Echoes." There used to be a *lot more* experimental hard rock guitar bands around like this back in the mid-1990s... (Rating: 5)



The Resonars - *Nonetheless Blue* (CD, [Get Hip](#), Pop)

Before we even gazed at the press release that accompanied this CD, we were thinking...*hmmm...The Resonars kinda remind us of The Grip Weeds*. Almost immediately after this thought entered our minds...we gazed down and saw that the folks at Get Hip had already compared the two bands to one another. This Arizona-based band plays music that seems to draw heavily from 1960s psychedelic pop from the United States and Great Britain. Not only are the songs reminiscent of this style of music...but even the sound quality of *Nonetheless Blue* fits. This is a very short album...these twelve tracks flash by in just under thirty minutes. But quality is what counts...and quality is what makes the songs on this album so rewarding and fulfilling. Rather than merely rehash the sounds of an era gone by...these guys use that source as a diving board to express their own present day viewpoints. Nifty pop cuts include "Nonetheless Blue," "Places You Have Been," "No Problem At All," and "As A Matter of Fact." Neat chord progressions here. Pleasing and uplifting. Recommended for fans of **Outrageous Cherry**. (Rating: 5+)



[Chris Robley](#) - *The Drunken Dance of Modern Man in Love* (CD, **Cutthroat Pop**, Progressive pop)

This is a rather complex and depthful album...so be forewarned. The band is the project spearheaded by **Chris Robley**...a young man with a rather unorthodox approach to modern progressive pop. There's a wild variety of instruments swimming around in these tracks...everything from vibraphone to theramin to organ to gong to mandolin to timpani...and that's just the *beginning*

(all kinds of snappy snap and clickety click noises are listed as instruments as well). Robley's stream-of-consciousness pop is slightly ethereal and possesses strange dreamlike qualities. Considering the wild array of sounds and approaches here...it is surprising indeed how ultimately smooth and accessible these tunes sound. This album must have taken an incredible amount of time and energy to record and yet...it all comes across sounding rather direct and instantly inspired. Chris Robley has a sound and style that are all his own. Will this be a *plus* for him in the years ahead...or detrimental because his music *doesn't sound like other artists*...? Only time will tell. For the time being, we are becoming more and more addicted to tracks like "Culture Jammer," "Little Love Affairs," "Faulkner's South," and "Aubade." Neat stuff.

(Rating: 5+)



Sea Wolf - *Leaves In The River* (CD, [Dangerbird](#), Pop)

Sea Wolf is driven by the songwriting skills of **Alex Brown Church**...a young fellow whose music sounds surprisingly mature and classic in nature. Although Church played most of the instruments on this album, he enlisted help in this project from no less than thirteen other musicians. *Leaves In The River* is a truly smooth and beautiful collection of tunes. The songs sound familiar in a strange way...so much so that you may very well get the feeling you have heard them before (although that is obviously *not* the case as all ten tracks are originals). We were a bit surprised to see that this was released on the Dangerbird label...because we usually associate the company with odd and noisy modern bands (?). But it is, indeed, to Dangerbird's advantage to offer a wide array of artists with varying styles...as this opens up their world to many more multiple layers of potential listeners. Alex Church's tunes will definitely appeal to youngsters...but more mature music fans will be just as likely to latch onto his smart, soft, and personal songs. *Leaves In The River* is a soft and absorbing spin full of introspective lyrics and memorable melodies. The arrangements are appropriately slick and subtle...allowing the listener to focus on the substance that is inherent in these tunes. We can't think of many folks in recent years who have released such a strong debut. Sturdy tracks include "Leaves In The River," "The Rose Captain," "You're A Wolf," and "Song for the Dead." Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



SEXUAL DESIRES

Your shitty little
Sexual desires are
Pathetic and meaningless
In the big scheme of
Things.

(Rating: 1)



Sightings - *Through the Panama* (CD, [Load](#), Progressive/experimental/rock)

This is the oddest CD we have heard this month. *Through the Panama* is the sixth album from **Sightings**. Wow...this is a difficult one to describe, digest, and understand. Sightings play modern rock music that is extremely heady, inventive, unorthodox, and confusing. There really isn't a normal song on this album. Some are more accessible and listenable than others...but none are what we would describe as normal. The band's more melodic music is strangely unfamiliar...infused with lots of accidental guitars and sounds. The band's less melodic music is...well...*very less melodic*. We get so tired of loud rock bands who constantly play in fifth gear...tearing away at their instruments full-force 100% of the time. In the end, most of these bands all sound the same. That is, perhaps, why Sightings music is so oddly pleasing and unusual.

Through the Panama

is most certainly a harsh, loud album. But don't expect to hear lightning fast drums and buzzsaw guitars. The loudness in the music here is presented in pure strength and attitude. This is twenty-first experimental rock the way it *ought* to be played. Bizarre hypnotic tracks include "A Rest," "Debt Hoofs," "In The Most Real of Hells," and "Through the Panama" (the title track is a really weird experience that sounds like the devil is drifting through your head). Weird stuff...but not just weird...very, very *intriguing*. Recommended. (Rating: 5++)



Soft - *Gone Faded* (CD, [Academy Fight Song](#) / **Silver Sleeve Records**, Pop)

If this band isn't an automatic hit among hipsters and serious fans of the underground...well, we'll just take a suicide pill and *die*. The guys in **Soft** have come up with a mighty strong debut. *Gone Faded* features wonderfully uplifting pop tunes drenched in cool guitars and subtle, infectious rhythms. If you love really good guitar bands, there's a good chance you will find yourself immediately entranced by this album. The band's sound teeters somewhere in between artists like **The Lassie Foundation**, **The Shoes**, and **The Stone Roses**...without ever sounding too much like any of them. The dual guitars sound just *fantastic*...as do **Johnny Reineck**'s dreamy, subtle vocals (the guy has a voice so smooth that it could skip over water). Not a lot more to say here...except that we *highly recommend* this one without reservation. Exceptional tracks include "Gone Faded," "Dropping," "Ten Times Strong," and "Hot Club." An instant hit. (Rating: 5+++)



So They Say - *Life In Surveillance* (CD, [Fearless](#), Rock)

Smart, ballsy, loud rock with real punch. The guys in St. Louis, Missouri's **So They Say** write and play rather thick and complex modern hard rock that really jumps out at you. The tunes on *Life In Surveillance* are an almost perfect blend of power pop, heavy metal, and hard rock. We are particularly intrigued by the guitars on this album. Instead of merely blaring away into infinity, guitarists **David Schroeder** and **Nicholas Walters** play some really cool heady riffs that bounce on and off one another like nervous insects. And while **Joseph Hamilton** and Schroeder can certainly amp up their vocals when necessary, they don't seem averse to moments of slightly soft reflection (the vocal harmonies sound fantastic). The rhythms provided by **Justin Hanson** (drums) and **Joe Hoermann** (bass) are the sturdy anchor that seems to keep everyone focused. Very few bands seem to be able to tread that fine line where power pop meets heavy metal...but these guys do so with agility and style. Kickass explosive rockers include "Just Forget My Name," "Wake Me Up," "Whisper of Sin," and "Nuclear Sunrise." (Rating: 5)



Starving Daughters - *Such Buds* (CD EP, [Tender Loving Empire](#), Progressive pop)

First off, we must thank the nifty folks at Tender Loving Empire for being kind enough to send us a copy of this limited edition EP (only 500 numbered copies of the first edition of this hand silk-screened EP were made). But this wouldn't really be such a big deal...if it were not for the *truly cool* music on this CD. The story of how this band's name came to be is worth mentioning. During one practice, all of the band members realized that they had something in common...none of them had sisters. Deciding that their parents may have done away with any female babies, the members named their band **Starving Daughters**. The six tunes on this EP sound something like a cross between **The Flaming Lips** and **The Television Personalities** (both of which are *babysue* favorites). The songs are mostly laidback and slightly psychedelic...but ultimately hummable and completely groovy. The guitars are wonderfully intricate and spacey...and the vocals fit the music to a T. Super satisfying cuts include "No Thanks," "Sorry I Asked," and "Won't Suck." Killer stuff. (Rating: 5+)



[Shannon Taylor](#) - *If It Is To Be As It Is* (Independently released CD, Pop)

Our first reaction to **Shannon Taylor**'s music was that it seemed to sound like **The Beatles** at times...but after a few more spins, we finally realized that *If It Is To Be As It Is* has much more in common with **Neil Innes**. Being huge Innes fans, we found ourselves almost immediately affected by the wonderfully catchy tunes on this album. These smooth modern pop rockers feature some absolutely lovely guitar work and the subtle use of mellotron works surprisingly well. In the end, however, it is Shannon's vocals that really make his music stand out from the crowd. This man has a great, understated voice and his harmony overdubs are precise and exacting. Not a lot more to say here...except that *If It Is To Be As It Is*

has the potential to put listeners in a really good frame of mind. We were in a dull kinda mood the day we popped this in but a few hours later...we were feeling *mighty fine*. Nifty, classy tracks include "Surviving Sunday," "You Should Be Here Today," "It Falls To Me," and "A Thousand Reasons Why." Recommended. (Rating: 5+++)



[TheGoStation](#) - *Passion Before Function* (CD, [EdgeDelay](#), Pop)

We honestly can't decide what to make of this band. When the guys in **TheGoStation** are at their **best** they sound like the poppier straightforward tunes by the **Psychedelic Furs** and **Guided By Voices**. Neat, rather neat. But...when they're at their **worst**...they sound very, very, *very much* like **R.E.M.** Bad, very bad...and regular *babysue* readers probably already know our opinion of R.E.M. (*it spells V-O-M-I-T*). So here we have an album featuring ten hummable singalong tunes. Do the tunes feature mostly the **BEST** elements of this band...or the **WORST**? We can't decide so...perhaps when you come to a conclusion you'll let *us* know... (Not Rated)

THEIR MOST BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES

When someone close to you dies
 Have them buried in
 Their most beautiful clothes.
 As they deteriorate and rot
 They will slowly liquify and be absorbed by
 Their most beautiful clothes.

(Rating: 1)



TICKING LICKING

The clock is ticking.
 Tick, tick, tick.
 The dog is licking.
 Lick, lick, lick.

(Rating: 1)



Tiesto - *In Search of Sunrise 6* (Double CD, [Nettwerk](#), DJ/dance/various artists compilation)

Is there less disco and dance music being recorded and released these days...are have we just been cut out of the loop by some of the less open-minded dance labels and publicists across the globe...? No matter and *who cares*...because occasionally some great dance music still slides into our nifty little mail box. And this one certainly came at an opportune time. This double CD set features tracks from various artists compiled by DJ **Tiesto**. These discs offer a nice clear snapshot of where dance music is at in 2007 in Ibiza. Tiesto presents a total of 28 tracks here by artists that include **Es Vedra**, **Solaris Heights**, **The Veil Kings**, **Taxigirl**, **Imogen Heap**, **Nic Chagall**, **JES**, **Maor Levi**, **Jedidja** and many more. The beats are steady and the sounds are heady in this non-stop dance mix. This music pays homage to the dance craze of the 1970s...while forging a new way forward with the unlimited potential provided by continually updated software and hardware. No wonder Tiesto has received so much recognition of late. What can we say? Hey, *the man has taste*. (Rating: 5)



Trolleyvox - *Your Secret Safe / Luzerne* (Double CD, [Transit of Venus](#), Pop)

We really admire the folks in **Trolleyvox**...not only for their music but also because of the way they are marketing themselves. While the band's tunes are certainly available for download, as an incentive for folks to buy the real thing...they created a beautifully packaged double CD package (complete with colorful lyric booklet) that sells for the price of a single disc. The packaging is lovely indeed...but the songs are the real draw here. *Your Secret Safe* features the

full-band line-up and is our favorite of the two CDs. Trolleyvox songs are smart and memorable...often recalling some of the better bands we have heard on the Merge label. Lead vocalist Beth Filla seems to have several different voices. One minute she sounds something like **Linda Hopper (Oh OK, Magnapop)**...and a few songs later she sounds more like **Kate Bush**. *Luzerne*, the second CD, features the softer side of the band played with mostly acoustic instruments. A word of warning...the tunes on these CDs may take a few spins to sink in...so if you're looking for a quick, immediate fix...you may need something with a little less substance. *Luzerne* is a neat, moody collection of tracks...but the more upbeat, super hummable tunes on *Your Secret Safe*

blow us away the most. Superb pop cuts include "I Call On You," "Reading," "Jean Jacket" (we really dig this one), and "Cricket in Euphoria." (Rating: 5+)



Mike Uva and Hook Boy - *Static Songs* (CD, [Collectible Escalators](#), Pop)

This is such a smooth accessible album. Surprisingly melodic and accessible, *Static Songs* may be an underground release...but the songs are so smooth and familiar that just about anyone could enjoy them (if they had the chance to hear them, of course). We can hear lots of possible influences here. At times, **Mike Uva's** tunes remind us of **The Feelies**, **Richard Thompson**, and **Ray Davies**...and that's just the beginning. So many modern artists rely on technology to get their point across. Uva seems to have the exact opposite idea. Instead of burying his songs in technology and too many overdubs, he presents them simply using only the bare essentials. This approach works extremely well on *Static Songs*. The tracks sound very warm and genuine...and completely free of gimmicks. The more we spin this one...the better the songs sound. Love them gee-tars. Subtle smart pop tracks include "Hook Boy," "Magic Marker," "Like Water You Press," and "Reunion." Very satisfying... (Rating: 5+)



Jessica Vale - *Brand New Disease* (CD, [Explicit Records](#), Pop/rock)

Nifty atmospheric rock with a spacey feel. This is **Jessica Vale's** long awaited follow-up to *The Sex Album* which she released in 2006. *Brand New Disease* features eleven goth rockers that are sometimes reminiscent of artists like **Siouxsie Sioux** and **Lene Lovich**. The songs feature guitars drenched in effects and danceable rhythms...both of which support Jessica's soft and sultry dreamlike vocals. Her music doesn't have a direct, immediate impact like some artists whose music is more instantly accessible. We had to spin *Disease* several times before the tracks began to sink in. If the songs on this album don't make an instant dent in people's minds...the cover art most certainly *will*. The CD features a bizarre photograph of Jessica laying on the floor wearing a clown-like dress made entirely of what appears to be newspaper (!?!). Pretty neat. Commercial music fans will probably find this too artsy and odd for their tastes. But our guess is that fans of the underground will find a lot of substance here. Top picks: "Black and Blue," "No Soul," "Night in Sarajevo," "You Don't Wanna Know," and "Together Alone." (Rating: 4+++++)



Rick Wakeman - *G'ole!* (CD, [Voiceprint](#), Instrumental)

The folks at Britain's Voiceprint label are slowly but surely making obscure out-of-print releases from Rick Wakeman once again available to the general public. This, the soundtrack to the film *G'ole!* was issued on vinyl many years back...but this marks the first time the album has been made available on CD. Recorded and released way, way, way back in 1982, the album features twelve smart, articulate keyboard instrumentals. **Yes** fans will probably be particularly interested in this release, as some of the sounds and styles here seem to reflect Wakeman's glory days with one of the ultimate English progressive dinosaur bands. Compared to the sound of today's instrumental albums, the quality of these recordings may initially seem a bit blurry and lacking polish. But if you turn the volume up just a bit...you will find there's a lot more going on here than first meets the ears. Cool classically-influenced compositions include "The Dove (Opening Ceremony)," "Wayward Spirit," "No Possible," "Frustration," and "Spanish Montage." (Rating: 4+++++)



West Side Story - *West Side Story* (CD, [Decca](#), Musical/soundtrack)

We must admit right off the bat that we have never ever cared for musicals. And it's not only because of the kind of

songs usually heard in them...but also because most people that we meet who are really into musicals seem rather...well...*superficial*

(this might be an unfair categorization but we have found this to be the case more often than not). Our exposure to **Leonard Bernstein's** *West Side Story*

is minimal at best. The only bits and pieces we ever heard from the musical were utilized by **Alice Cooper** on his *School's Out* album. So at this point some of you may very well be asking...if you stupid people at *babysue* don't like musicals and aren't familiar with *West Side Story*...*why on earth* are you reviewing it? Good question, and one that we don't really have an answer for. Except that we try to make people aware of quality releases that we feel might be of interest to them...even if, in some cases, those releases aren't quite our own cup of tea. This is the first new professional recording of this musical to be made since 1984 when Bernstein himself conducted and **Kiri Te Kanawa** played the part of Maria. This new recording features **Hayley Westenra** as Maria and **Vittorio Grigolo** as Tony. While this won't turn us into big fans of Broadway musicals...we can certainly recognize a professional project done right when we hear it. Our guess is that the newest *West Side Story* will be a major hit with fans... (Not Rated)

We The Living - *Heights of the Heavens* (Independently released CD, Pop)

This album arrived with no accompanying press release or additional information...so we'll just say it as we play it. This self-released CD includes ten super slick recordings that feature a big thick sound and tons of effects and overdubs. **We The Living** consists of **Matt Holmen** (guitars), **Benjamin Schaefer** (drums), **John Paul Roney** (vocals, acoustic guitar, piano), and **Stefan Benkowski**

(bass, vocals). Someone did a great job mastering this CD...the overall volume on this disc seems to be about twice what we normally hear on independent releases. The sound quality and arrangements are impressive...but the main thing that we like about this band are the *songs*. Roney wrote all of the tunes but one (the band includes a cover of **Bill Withers'** "Ain't No Sunshine"). *Heights of the Heavens*

will likely appeal to a wide variety of folks. Our only concern about this album is that the sound is so *extremely* slick and glossy that it can sometimes interfere with one's ability to absorb the actual substance in the songs. That is a minor point, however, as these guys have obviously created an album with a lot of staying power. Cool cuts include "Typical," "London Rain," "75 and 17," and "History." (Rating: 4++++)



Zolar X - *X Marks the Spot* (CD, **Alternative Tentacles**, Pop)

One of the more unlikely reformations of the twenty-first century, the rebirth of **Zolar X** is indeed a rather odd phenomenon. When the band made their original splash decades ago, they were met with lots of curiosity...but very little commercial success. They were probably seen as a mere novelty act and little more. But over time some novelty acts become credible entities...and such has been the case with the fellows in Zolar X. The band has a very strong image...they all look like martians and sing songs that recall the glory days of 1970s glam rock. But let's flash to the present and consider the band's new album *X Marks the Spot*. What surprises us most is how current and credible these guys' music now sounds. Instead of coming across burned out and dated...the new Zolar X tunes sound very much like other modern bands who are possibly half their age. The best way of describing this band might be to say that they look and sound something like **Spinal Tap**

from outer space playing modern buzzsaw bubblegum pop. If the band was nothing more than a gimmick we wouldn't be impressed. But, as this album proves, these guys have come up with some *substantial songs* that lend true credibility to their reformation. Cool catchy cuts include "Oveon Triopp," "Saucers On Sunset," "Astro Tots," and "X Marks the Spot." Like totally GROOVY man... (Rating: 5)



Additional Items Received:

- Action Design - Into a sound
- Carrie Akre - Last the evening
- A Julius Orange - Of leverage or magnetism
- Alphabetical Order - Alphabetical Order
- Autumn Machine - Silent fate

Annie Barker - Mountains and tumult
 Bell Hollow - Foxgloves
 Black Tie - Goodbye, farewell
 Built By Snow - Noise
 Vashti Bunyan - Some things just stick in your mind
 (*this one's really good...wish we had received a real copy to review!*)
 Deana Carter - The chain
 Chubbies - The official greatest hits
 CosmoSonic - Punk rock...for lovers!
 Cynics - Here we are
 Dali's Llama - Sweet sludge
 Deep Dark Woods - Hang me oh hang me
 Destination Oblivion - December sun
 Michael J. Downey and the World - America
 Dutch Kills - Blissville
 Eastern Blok - Folk tales
 Eternal Faithi - Losing faith
 Eulogies - Eulogies
 First to Leave - Forging a future
 Patrick Flynn - Good news
 For Against - In the marshes
 Gina Gershon - In search of cleo
 Alexis Gideon - Flight of the liophant
 Grand Ole Party - Humanimals
 Grayceon - Grayceon
 Guards of Metropolis - Alligator
 Hasbeen - Big salty hands
 Holler, Wild Rose! - Our little hymnal
 Nathan Holscher - Even the hills
 Hot Hot Heat - Happiness ltd.
 Michael Hurley - Ancestral swamp
 Japanther - Skuffed up my huffy
 Just Jack - Overtones
 Kamera - Resurrection
 Karl Denson Trio - Lunar orbit
 Katy Mae - The sweetheart deal
 Harvey Keene - Best that money can buy
 Brad Laner - Neighbor singing
 Laverne Christie Trio - East of the sun, west of the moon
 Leiana - No going back
 Letterperfect - In transit
 Magnet - The simple life
 Man The Destroyer - Day of grey
 Steven Messenger - Edge of the wall
 Mia & Jonah - Rooms for adelaide
 Mountain Home - Mountain Home
 Mouthus - Saw a halo
 New York City Smoke - Musique noir
 No-Fi Soul Rebellion - Terrible muscles
 Octoberman - Run from safety
 Of Love Possessed - The weight of a gun
 Oslo - The rise and fall of love and hate
 Outformation - Traveler's rest
 P.A.F. - Fingerprints, medicine
 Phonograph - Hiawatha talking machine EP
 Matt Pond PA - Last light

Prids - Something difficult
Racing Cars - Second wind
Collin Raye - Selected hits
Finn Riggins - A soldier, a saint, an ocean explorer
Rockfour - Memories of the never happened
Scene of Action - Scene of Action
Sergeant - Sergeant
Mishka Shubaly - How to make a bad situation worse
Skipping Girl Vinegar - One chance b/w Cold come the nights
Slow Burning Car - Blowback
Small White - Product placement
Melvin Smith - Portrait
Sojourners - Hold on
Sole and the Skyrider Band - Sole and the Skyrider Band
Soulshake Express - Soulshake Express EP
William Steffey - Romance of the spaceways
Joe Strell - Enormous morning
Sunday Drivers - Archetypes EP
Tomi - Tomi
Various Artists - Little Darla has a treat for you, v. 25
Olivea Watson - Way down deep
Tom Wehrle - When you can't wait for tomorrow
Weightlifters - Last of the sunday drivers
Within Chaos - Virulent
Arthur Yoria - Handshake smiles

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