

# New Releases

## SCOTT WALKER

*The Drift*  
Beggars Banquet/4AD (2603)

If you require any proof that time passes quicker today than it did a few years back, consider this. Eleven years separate *The Drift*, Scott Walker's latest album, from *Tilt*, his last. But the gulf does not seem even half as dramatic as the mere decade that divided *Tilt* from its predecessor, *Climate Of Hunter*.

Part of the reason, of course, is that Walker has been much more visible this time around. Producing Pulp's final album, curating the Meltdown festival, guesting on a *James Bond* soundtrack... considering his status among rock's most legendary recluses, he's been busy. More important, however, is the fact that, last time around, Walker's continued existence was still a well-kept secret among the handful of acolytes who were aware that there was life after The Walker Brothers, the California trio with which he first came to fame. Today, again, the legend not only precedes him, it has also spawned a mountain of compilations, a couple of box sets, a bunch of reissues and the starry-eyed praise of a new wave of fans whose dads were still kids when Scott was a star.

But, if the buildup to the release of *The Drift* was less dramatic than before, the music leaves *Tilt* sounding almost conventional — which, if you remember that album, is quite an achievement. Abstract, obtuse, insanely dramatic and dramatically mad, *The Drift* is the noise that you hear when you're fast asleep and your brain is trying to make sense of the workmen building a condo up the road. Bleak, dissonant, slightly frightening, there is sense to be made of it and a beautiful soundscape to fashion from the frag-



Courtesy of Beggars Banquet

### Scott Walker

ments. But you have to join the dots yourself; neither Walker's voice (as impressively rich and portentous as ever) nor the instrumentation will do the job for you. But lyrics leap out as footholds for your imagination to cling to, and repeated listens will make marvelous sense of even the darkest pieces.

Plus, there is a cheat sheet — “Jesse,” ostensibly about Elvis Presley's stillborn twin but described by Walker as his Sept. 11 song, is the album's first video and somehow seems less foreboding when the shards are shaped by a picture. The album closes with “A Lover Loves,” an assault that is almost a ballad. Even there, however, Walker has fashioned an album that is quite unlike anything he, or anybody else, has ever created, and one that doesn't even invite the unwary to listen to it. It dares them.

— Dave Thompson

## OSI

*Free*  
InsideOut Music (SPV 48862 CD)

OSI's self-titled 2003 debut was a barnstormer of a progressive-metal supergroup project, so folks hotly anticipated this return visit to the Office Of Strategic Influence, with *Free*. Three employees inhabit the office, namely Dream Theater drummer Mike Portnoy, Fates Warning guitarist Jim Matheos, and Chroma Key/ex-Dream Theater keyboardist Kevin Moore.

Moore had previously created a Herculean masterpiece of Roger Waters-level audacity in Chroma Key's 2003 concept album *Graveyard Mountain Home*, so at this point, it's no surprise that many looked to *Free* for more Moore than anything else. As if everybody involved were starting to realize Moore's genius, there seems to be a stepping aside from standard prog-metal fireworks for more of a chilly, ultra-modern, sleek and even lushly laid-back keyboard and vocals experience. Sure, the guitar songs are there, although the riffs are usually circular and not all that part of the melodic brew — Matheos is almost relegated to rhythm and texture.

Boy, does *Free* fill up on texture, with Moore putting on a clinic of traditional and arcane sound-sculpting, the highlight being the insanely catchy opener “Sure You Will” and the out-of-character acoustic closer “Our Town,” which is the most Pink Floyd-ian track on a record that rises to the standard of Waters' *Amused To Death* opus. But most impressive is Moore's amoral, detached, nearly breaking but strangely confident voice — the term world-weary would fit

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## NEW RELEASES NEWS



MVD Audio will release Marillion's *Marbles Live* Aug. 29. The disc features the band performing their *Marbles* album in its entirety at London's Astoria July 10-11, 2004. Track list: “The Invisible Man,” “Marbles I,” “You're Gone,” “Angelina,” “Marbles II,” “Don't Hurt Yourself,” “Fantastic Place,” “Marbles III,” “The Damage,” “Marbles IV,” “Neverland” and “Estonia.”

**Other new releases of note:** **Black Uhuru With Sly & Robbie**, *Dubbin' It Live* (DVD); *Reggae Showdown: Reggae Power In 5.1 Vol 1* — **Dennis Brown Live At Reggae Canfest** (DVD); **various artists**, *Reggae Showdown: Reggae Power In 5.1 Vol 2*, *Giants Of Sting* (DVD); *Reggae Showdown: Reggae Power In 5.1 Vol 4* — **Shabba At Showdown** (DVD, Taxi); **The Church Of Tiamat** (DVD, Music Video Distributors); **Spencer Dickinson**, *The Man Who Lives For Love*; **Barrington Levy**, *Wanted*; and **Luciano**, *Live In San Francisco* (2B1 Records, CD/DVD); **Abby Travis**, *Glitter Mouth* (self-released); **Mike Compton**, *Stomp* (Acoustic Disc); **various**, *Abominable — Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Aleph Records); **Li' Ed & The Blues Imperials**, *Rattleshake* and **Cephas & Wiggins**, *Shoulder To Shoulder* (Alligator); **Simeon Harris**, *The Assessment* (Alternity Records); **Desperado**, *Ace* (Angel Air); **Sufjan Stevens**, *Avalanche: Outtakes And Extras From Illinois* (Asthmatic Kitty); **Tommy James**, *Hold The Fire* (Aura/Kayos); **Fallopian**, *Dammit, Eat Your Pudding* (Avebury); **The Studiofix**, *Will Change Your Life* (Avebury); **Matt Angus** (Black Potatoe Records); **Scott Vestal & Alice Newman**, *Goin' To The Dance* (Bless Your Heart Music); **Nick Moss & The Flip Tops**, *Live At Chan's* and **Bill Lupkin & Friends**, *Where I Come From* (Blue Bella Records); **Jason Moran**, *Artist In Residence* and **Jane Bunnett**, *Radio Guantanamo: GuantanamoBlues Project Vol. 1* (Blue Note); **Billy Price**, *Featuring The Billy Price Band* (Bonedog Records); **Viceroy**, *Viceroy* (Bushwood Records); **Bob Seger**, *Face The Promise* and **Hedley** (Capitol); **Big George Brock**, *Hard Times: A Film By Damien Blaylock* (Cat Head, DVD); and **King Karma** (Centurion).

## Indie label spotlight: Proper

### HACIENDA BROTHERS What's Wrong With Right Proper (PR PACD004)

The Hacienda Brothers, led by singer/songwriter Chris Gaffney and Dave Gonzalez, ripped up the charts with their debut album last year, a fantastic “western soul” release. A key element to the Brothers' success was the enlistment of legendary Muscle Shoals icon Dan Penn, who provided many of

his masterfully crafted songs and produced the record. Now, the magic has once again been created, as Penn teams with the Haciendas for *What's Wrong With Right*, an excellent 13-song release.

The new album features several Gonzalez/Gaffney originals, as well as some Penn classics, including a hot new version of “Cry Like A Baby,” “It Tears Me Up” and “Life's Little Ups And Downs.” There's also a primo cover of the 1968 Intruders hit, “Cowboys To Girls.”

The centerpiece of the album has to be the title track, “What's Wrong With Right,” cowritten by Gonzalez and Penn, a beautiful steel guitar-laced country tune destined to become a classic. Penn is one of the South's most prolific songwriters as well as an A-list producer, and combined with the ultra-talented Hacienda Brothers, he adds yet another feather to his cap and another strong branch to the rock 'n' roll family tree.

— Michael Buffalo Smith