



EXCEPTER
DEBT DEPT
Paw Tracks/US/CD

The fourth record (and Paw Tracks debut) from Brooklyn's Excepter is by far the creepiest offering from the experimental performance troupe, and finds the six-piece conditioning its decayed jams of electronic scree and industrial hiss into a scary, yet sexy-sounding beast. Abundant in nihilistic/surrealistic overtones all at once, tracks like "Burgers" and "Any and Every" insert dub and pop sensibilities into the mix, usually centered on a programmed, Whitehouse-style groove mashed with dilating synth bass and choppy beats. Ditto for "Kill People," a bone-chilling romp of shouting, echoing vocals and pulsating clatter that sounds like an out-pop dance hit from the darkest corner of the universe. *Chris Sabbath*



DENNIS FERRER
MY WORLD AS THEY REMIXED IT
King Street/US/CD

Close your eyes: What names might appear on the reworkings of deep-house stalwart Dennis Ferrer's album, *The World as I See It*? Sure, nothing's *wrong* with getting Joe Claussell and Sunshine Jones on this—hell, Jones' "Transitions" is one of *My World's* finest tracks. But it's not just that there are few surprises here; there are few moments when anything seems to happen at all. Milanese duo Dolls Combers' electro take on "I Can't Imagine" has dancer's legs, and the gospel-tinged "Church Lady (MF Remix)" jumps out. But mostly, this neither subtracts from nor adds to Ferrer's legacy. *Justin Hopper*



FINK
DISTANCE AND TIME
Ninja Tune/UK/CD

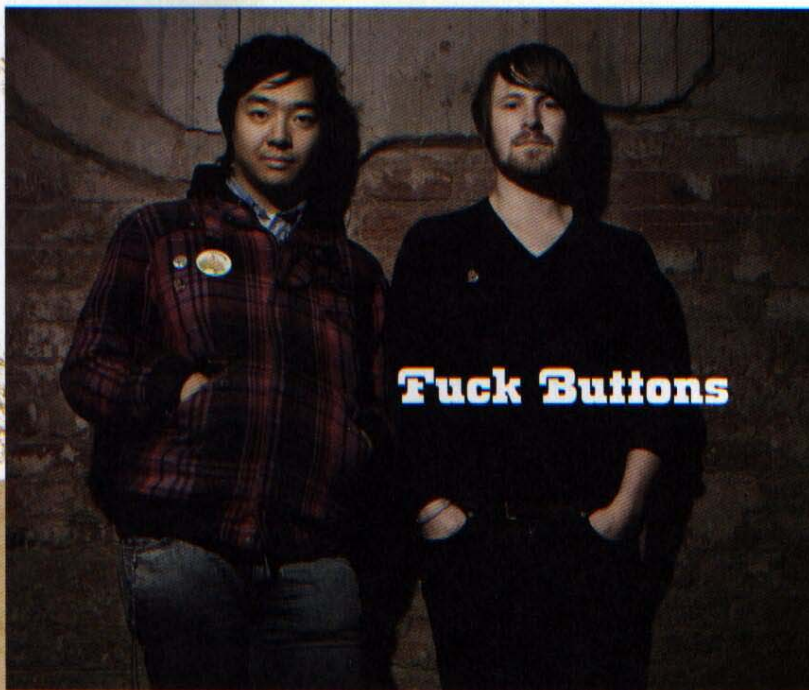
I've gotta hand it to Fin "Fink" Greenall for bravely sticking to his acoustic guitar and husky tenor instead of reverting back to his sampler, no matter what his fans wish. But he's still not a nimble lyricist, as he tends to indulge hopelessly romantic clichés where he either writes valentines or Dear John notes to poor lasses. Greenall is cute at best—he sings about missing blueberry pancakes and drops lyrics lil' "I used to live on Cloud 9/Now I moved to 8" amid decent, inoffensive melodies and wallflower beats can't help but feel nostalgic for his old, drawn-in-crayon trip-hop days. *Cameron Macdonald*

JOE HIGGS
LIFE OF CONTRADICTION
Pressure Sounds/UK/CD

Dubbed the Father of Reggae by Jimmy Cliff, Joe Higgs had a profound influence on artists like Bk Marley and The Wailers, whom he mentored in Trenchtown in Kingston. He even wrote Peter Tosh seminal "Steppin' Razor." His 1975 debut album is one of those lost classics that somehow eluded mainstream acclaim, but hopefully this reissue will change that. Included here are remakes of hits Higgs recorded in the early '60s, like "Come on Home" as well as "Life of Contradiction," which sounds as fresh today as it did when it was originally recorded in 1972. Higgs passed away in 1999, but his spirit lives on in his beautiful melodies and hopeful messages captured best here on his signature song "There's Reward." *James Mayo*

KELLEY POLAR
I NEED YOU TO HOLD ON WHILE THE SKY IS FALLING
Environ/US/CD

With his second album, Mike Kelley (a.k.a. Kelley Polar) has entered into a small pantheon of electropop conceptualists inhabited by the likes of Matthew Herbert and labelmates Metro Area. *I Need You to Hold On While the Sky Is Falling* buttresses moments of dance-floor purity like "Entropy Reigns" (à la *Depêche Mode*) with the likes of "A Dream in Three Parts," based on melodies composed by Romanian romanticist George Enesco (which winds up sounding a bit like *The Communards*). This is pop that borrows from Philip Glass while retaining an electro-egalitarianism: Is it always successful? No. Is it always beautifully, courageously ambitious? Hell, yeah. *Justin Hopper*



ERIC LAU
NEW TERRITORIES
Ubiquity/US/CD

All the tags for the music that Londoner Eric Lau makes sound contrived: future funk, nu-soul, bae head jazz—none of these really captures Lau's confident, cool essence. Sure, artists like Jay De Waajood, and SA-RA are Lau's creative cousins, but the 26-year-old beatmaker blazes his own trail via rich, song-based vocal numbers and sweet, spacious instrumentals. *New Territories* bubbles with optimism, illustrated on "Time Will Tell," which is buoyed by Bobbi Humphrey-style flute licks and sing Sariah Leah's hopeful messages. Lau has produced beats for Lupe Fiasco, Georgia Anne Muldrow, and Wildchild, but refreshingly it's U.K. locals Tawiah Bahel, and Sariah whose vocals light up his crisp no-nonsense soul beats. *Tomas Palermo*

JAMIE LIDELL
JIM
Warp/US/CD

It was moving, but the music on Jamie Lidell's *Multiply* was mostly a platform for his oversized voice and charisma. Who else can make wearing suits lined with mirrors—a human disco ball—look not so effortless but somehow appropriate? He flexes his irrefutable voice and charm on *Jim*, but it's the contributions of collaborators like Gonzales and Mocky that really stretch things out, generating a warm funkier, and more eclectic backdrop that Lidell swings over with style. The positively sunny "Anot Day," with chirping birds and schmaltzy strings, begins a streak of loose jams, including disco vamps and upbeat, Stevie-style soul. *Patrick Sisson*

FUCK BUTTONS
STREET HORRSING
ATP/UK/CD

Bristol duo Fuck Buttons have created a huge buzz—and not just in the blogosphere. Their debut album, *Street Horrsing*, is dominated by a truculent, enveloping buzz, possibly from a Roland 303 or a homemade generator of low-end madness, beneath which heroic melodies struggle for audibility. "Sweet Love for Planet Earth" opens with sprightly music-box tinkles, but they're quickly overrun by gnarly, fuzz-toned synths and haloed by angelic keyboard drones. Here and elsewhere on *Horrsing*, faint yet feral caterwauling, like Trent Reznor on helium, animates the background. But ultimately it's just another texture in a tsunami of tense oscillations and Brontosaurus-colonic tones. To keep stasis at bay, sporadic fits of tribal drumming (recalling Cro-Magnon) and 4/4 kicks puncture the barbed din. Fuck Buttons follow Throbbing Gristle's lead on "Discipline," and their buzz-laden bombs are more powerful for it. *Dave Segal*

LUCIANO
JAH IS MY NAVIGATOR
VP/US/CD

Roots singer Luciano has been plenty creative since 1995, releasing over 40 albums. Granted, there's been plenty of generic material, and *Jah Is My Navigator* mixes worthwhile with mundane. Slightly overproduced and predictable, the man's voice still carries plenty of weight, especially when thin and mellow, as on the soft, R&B-inflected "Paradise Liberty." (If the voice sounds familiar on the Pet Tosh cover, "I'm the Tuffest," it should—it belongs to the Rastaman's son, Andrew.) Songs like "African Liberty" and "Wise Up Youth" are exactly the anthem-like cries you'd expect, making them slightly irrelevant. But when Luciano turns everything low, save for piano, violin, and voice, "Jah Canopy/Herbs" is the kind of song that lasts for generations. *Derek Beres*