



Tony Memmel

Here We Go

Tony Memmel's story starts out like a lot of guitarists'. He convinced his parents to go in half with him on an electric guitar when he was 13 years old. "They were supportive, but skeptical," he says. "When I first picked up the guitar, though, I didn't see it as a courageous act."

And most of us would agree that playing guitar isn't courageous—except in Tony's case. He was born without a left forearm. After almost a decade of experimenting with different kinds of homemade apparatuses to hold the picks, he's found a method that works for him, using duct tape and a cast that he re-creates every time he plays.

What's really remarkable, though, is that you don't notice any difference in his music. Tony's most recent CD, *Here We Go*, is marked by dogged optimism—"It's about getting out there and following a dream... overcoming adversity in life, but also knowing that that's not easy," he says.

Influenced by bands like the Counting Crows, Wilco, and the more piano-based Ben Folds, as well as by his Midwestern surroundings, *Here We Go* has a

rich, full-band sound that best fits in with some of the power-pop of the late '90s. Tony's voice is naturally deep and gravelly, but it's soothing; even when using phrases like, "Lord knows we've got time," there's no judgment from his songs' narrators, just gentle reminders.

Above all, as intricate and interesting as the music is, it has a familiarity that's addictive—it feels like music you should already know. In the refrain of "Helicopters and the Riot Squad," Tony says, "Please let me say all that I came here to say." This feels like more than just a narrative plea: it's the desire that motivates the entire disk. — **Katie Darby-Mullins** 🎧

To read more about Tony Memmel and other up-and-coming artists, visit KatieDarbyRecommends.com. To hear some of Tony's music or catch him on tour, visit TonyMommel.com.



CREDIT: ESTELIGH MEMMEL

From the opening of "Death Dealer", APMD bruise and pummel with unrelenting viciousness. "Sancrosanct" approaches black metal, whereas "The Blessed Void" is a low-end blur of head-smashing thrash. It all leads up to "Sadistic Vindicator", which closes things out with a huge wall of guitar sound and brutal, churning rhythms. This is an album of violent aggression, and though it's a limited palette of sound, it's a wholly effective one.

— **Todd Zachritz**

East Bay Ray And The Killer Smiles

"Self-Titled" CD

(MVD Audio)

★★★★★



East Bay Ray is the longtime guitarist from the Dead Kennedys, and his band (fronted by current DKs vocalist Skip Mckskipster) here team up with Butthole Surfers guitarist Paul Leary, who acts as producer. The results are strong and heavy on the punk tip, not surprisingly.

"You're Such A Fake", for example, is a punk song at heart, with hints of rockabilly and surf, courtesy of Ray's distinctive riffage. "Area 51" is a driving, up-tempo heavy attack, while "The Heart Is Something" is melodic, downtempo, and almost balladic, reminding me of Green Day. The boys will hate me for saying that, but it's true. "It's Broken" runs back to the more aggressive side, while "I'm A User" is classic-style melodic punk. This is a completely solid album, with superb production and plenty to offer for fans of classic punk rock.

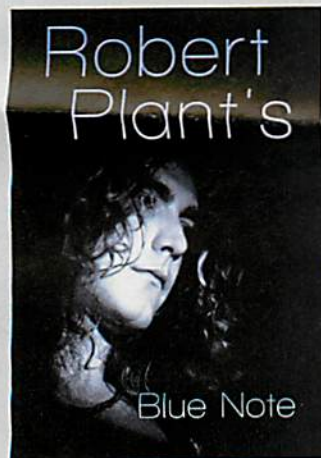
— **Todd Zachritz** 🎧

5stars

Robert Plant

"Robert Plant's Blue Note" DVD

(Sexy Intellectual UK)



This lengthy (155 minute) documentary exhaustively details the former Led Zeppelin frontman's history, from his initial inspirations of classic rock & roll and blues to his recent forays into Americana and bluegrass. The scope of this man's musical interests is deep and varied, indeed. His explorations of Arabic musics is examined in detail, and Plant is shown as much more than a rock singer. Rather, he's a renaissance man and an artist of the first order.

It's an unauthorized bio, but this one succeeds, tapping plenty of actual interviews with Plant himself alongside the usual array of writers, journalists, and critics. As well, we're treated to plenty of video of Plant in action and on-stage, from his rock-god days to his shaky solo work in the 80's to his newer, classier Americana and blues-tinged duets with Alison Krauss.

An excellent history lesson on a music legend. I learned a lot, and thus this one comes recommended. — *Todd Zachritz*



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