

# Sound check

## DVDs chronicle independent record stores; Nashville new CD and super group Mad Season has CD/DVD

**T**his first May Sound Check column kicks off with two DVDs about the problems, promise and potential of independent record stores in modern days. After that, you'll find reviews of a new CD from Nashville's Jessica Campbell, a Deluxe CD/DVD package from Seattle super group Mad Season and the latest recording from The McCrary Sisters.

**SOUND CHECK**



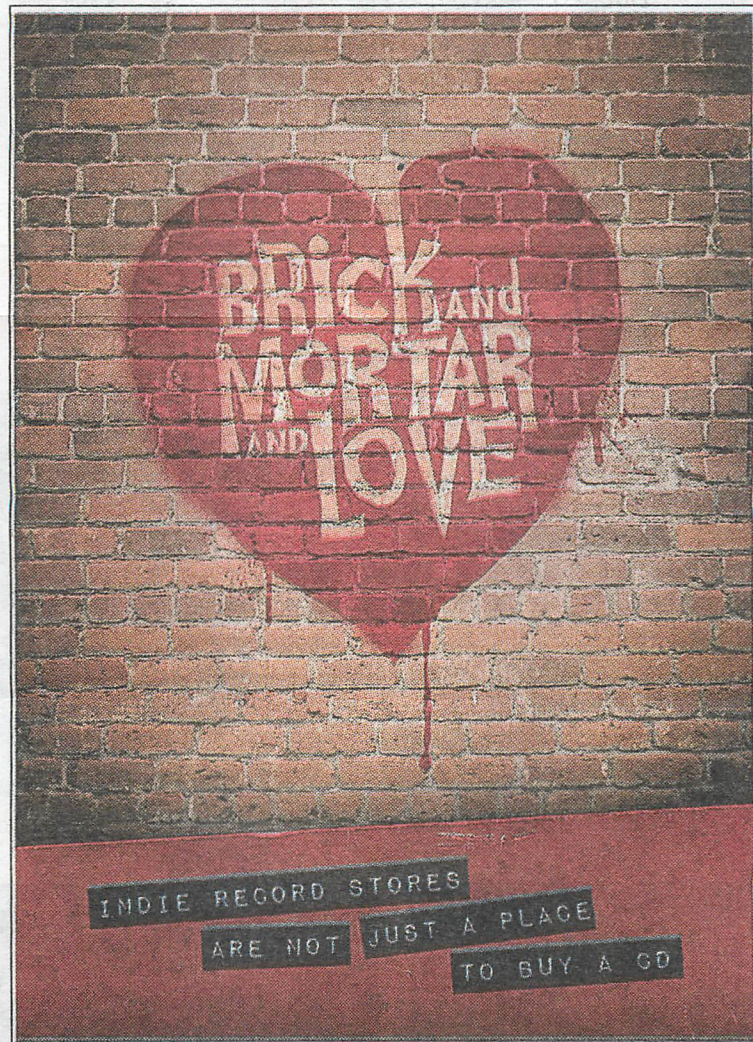
**Ricky Flake**



**'Last Shop Standing: The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Independent Record Shop,'** (MVDvisual, ★★★★★)

These two April 20 DVDs which are "record store day exclusives" offer glimpses of the ways that proprietors of record stores keep things going in these days of digital downloading. This one follows how things in the UK are doing by interviewing many record store owners, musicians (Johnny Marr, Paul Weller and Billy Bragg among them), Graham Jones, the author of "Last Shop Standing," and other folks.

There are discussions about the rise of vinyl record sales dur-



ing the 1970s punk-rock era when "anyone could make a record," and how early heroes like Elvis and The Beatles got things going. You'll hear obscure-at-times terms such as "listening booths," "chart shops," "golden age of record store retailing," "Napster," "vinyl quality" and "diversification."

This program seems more hopeful about independent stores' chances for survival than the one below, but both are interesting.

**'Brick and Mortar and Love,'** (MVDvisual, ★★★★★/2)

This DVD tells the story of ear X-tacy Records, a legendary independent Louisville, Ky., recorded music store as it struggles

to survive in the changing music industry. People on the Coast know how valuable an independent record store is now that we don't have one, right?

Interviews with owner John Timmons, store staff, musicians and many independent store owners from across the country will make viewers want to support stores like T-Bones in Hattiesburg where we spent a great Record Store Day 2013.

**'The Anchor & The Sail,'** Jessica Campbell (Little London Records, ★★★★★)

This April 30 CD, produced by Cason Cooley, is the follow-up to Nashville-based singer-songwriter Jessica Campbell's Great Escape album of a few years back.

Cooley adds keyboards, programming and other elements to a tight studio ensemble including drummer Will Sayles, bassist Matt Pierson, electric guitar, banjoist Tyler Burkum, fiddler Eleonore Denic and others. Jessica's lead and background vocals are deliciously effective on some tunes. Grammy-winning songwriter Dave Barnes adds vocals to "Mississippi."

Highlights include the catchy banjo-driven "Time," the witty lyrics throughout, the free-flowing title song and the lovely "Sunnyside."

Those who love singer/songwriters who bridge between different genres will enjoy this one.

**'Above,'** Mad Season (Columbia/Legacy, ★★★★★1/2)

This deluxe edition (available since April 2 in physical/digital formats plus a 12-inch Record Store Day vinyl edition) contains the ill-fated super group's lone studio album on CD one. A second CD has unreleased studio tracks from their unfinished second album with new lyrics written and sung by Mark Lanegan and a DVD of the band's last live performance.

Mad Season was formed in 1994 as a blues-based project with Alice In Chains vocalist Layne Staley, Pearl Jam guitarist Mike McCready, Screaming Trees drummer/percussionist Barrett Martin and Chicago blues/Walkabouts bassist John "Baker" Saunders. Tragically, both Layne (2002) and Saunders (1999) died of overdoses.

Disc one highlights include "November Hotel," an instrumental that shows the power of the guitar/drum/bass section; plus the haunting hit "River of Deceit," the powerful bonus track "Locomotive," the downbeat "Wake Up," Martin's cool drumming throughout (and his booklet notes), a blistering cover of Lennon's "I Don't Wanna Be a Soldier," and the blues-