

picks up, but then the cheap rockabilly grunge crossed with a loose cutesy pie indie aesthetic is a bit too disarrayed for its own good. They save their best till the last, "Tiny People," when they sing "You don't have to worry" over a nice vintage Velvet Underground III flavored backing. (blackandgreenerecords.com)

gravenhurst

THE WESTERN LANDS
(WARP)

Soft melodic electric music with bits of folk, shoegaze, and pop embedded in its lovely murmurings flows over *The Western Lands*. Gone are the more jarring dynamic attacks of their last album, 2005's *Fires in Distant Buildings*; now guitarist/singer **NICK TALBOT** and drummer **DAVE COLLINGWOOD** have added two members to produce a grand bit of harmonious sound sculpture, and their noisier, energetic rock moments merge seamlessly with their gentle side. They also include **FAIRPORT CONVENTION**'s "Farewell, Farewell" based on the traditional tune "Willy O' Winsbury," and dedicate their "She Dances" to **FAIRPORT**'s late singer **SANDY DENNY**. (warprecords.com)

great lakes myth society

COMPASS ROSE BOUQUET
(QUACKIMEDIA)

If you are an impatient listener who can't wait for a slow growing LP to work its way into your heart, I advise you to skip directly to the closing track, "The Gates of 1838." At six-plus minutes, it's a beautiful, stretched out bit of naval mythology about wine, women, and collapsing lighthouses. If this doesn't win you over directly then you won't like the rest of the disc, no matter how many times you listen to it. The rest of the Michigan quintet's second album is full of big pop songs in the mode of The Waterboys and Trip Shakespeare, full of powerful vocals, grand choruses, and folk-derived melodies—and not too shabby, either. (quackmedia.com)

richard hawley

LADY'S BRIDGE
(MUTE)

"Historically it connected the poor side of town, where I'm from, to the rich side. But it's also significant for me because I feel like I've crossed a bridge in my life lately." This is how Hawley explained his latest LP's title, named for the oldest bridge to cross the river Don in Sheffield, England. Formerly guitarist in Brit band **PULP**, Hawley received a lot of deserved attention for his solo debut *Cole's Corner* and *Lady's Bridge* continues his exploration of what it means to be English in the 21st century. He also captures a feeling of classic pop with his velvet voice and guitar tone recalling the heyday of Cliff Richard & the Shadows. He's definitely poised for classic status, as well. (mute.com)

jana hunter

THERE'S NO HOME
(GNOMONSONG)

This is Ms. Hunter's second record for

Gnomonsong, the label started by **DEVENDRA BANHART** and **ANDY CABIC (VETIVER)**, so one can safely assume that this will at times be folky and weird. And she doesn't disappoint. Hunter brings a fuller sound to this new disc, with impressive melodies and at times strangely clipped vocals behind both electric and acoustic songs. Despite electrical feedback ebbing and receding in a few places, nothing seems forced or breaks the spell of her delicate, cloud-like songs. Additional backup singers and players on drums, lap steel, bass, and keys come from such bands as **INOCULIST**, **DETHRO SKULL**, **FATAL FLYING GUILLOTEENS**, and **BRING BACK THE GUNS**. Nice. (gnomonsong)

bert jansch

FRESH AS A SWEET SUNDAY MORNING (DVD)
(MVD VISUAL)

Jansch is an English folk legend, influencing everyone from Neil Young and Jimmy Page to Ben Chasny. He made his name in the late '60s with his solo acoustic work and collaborations with folk/jazz band **PENTANGLE**. This straightforward 101-minute video presents an intimate, April 2006 concert in Sheffield, England, with him singing and finger picking a six-string guitar. He briefly introduces and gives some history of the songs, including stories about **JOHN RENBOURN**, **DAVY GRAHAM**, **ANN BRIGGS**, and **JACKSON C. FRANK**. Gone is the wild hair and gaunt looks of his *Jack Orion* days; he's filled out now, but his voice is unmistakable, and the guitar playing is stellar. Plus, there are plenty of close-ups of his fingering techniques for guitar students. (mvdvisual.com)

jennifer gentle

THE MIDNIGHT ROOM
(SUB POP)

Jennifer Gentle's last CD was a sporadic glimpse into the enchanted wood where Syd Barrett vanished many years ago. Since then, this Italian band lost collaborator/drummer **ALESSIO GASTALDELLO** and has become the solo project of songwriter/instrumentalist **MARCO FASOLO**. Where the previous LP featured chaotic noisy patches, a general spaciness, and occasional Donald Duck vocals, a new subtle depth of production makes its appearance. But a tuneless plodding seems to have replaced much of the fanciful melodies, and overall this is less than wonderful. Fasolo is currently touring with a full band; hopefully their input will spur him in a better direction—perhaps back to the wildwood. (subpop.com)

lightning dust

LIGHTNING DUST
(JAGJAGUWAR)

AMBER WEBER and **JOSHUA WELLS** spun off from the neo-hippy space rockers **BLACK MOUNTAIN** to produce an understated gem of a record. The duo wrote the songs and played all the instruments, and Weber sings most of the songs (though Wells adds backup and does a nice duet on "Jump In"). The backing is simple enough: piano, guitar, strings, and

more, all used sparingly, and Weber has a haunting voice that somehow traverses the same ghost country that the Handsome Family call home. Somehow she conveys gloom, hope, strength, and vulnerability all at the same time, and it's her voice that's the real heart of this record. (jagjaguwar.com)

michio kurihara

SUNSET NOTES
(20|20|20/PEDAL)

boris with michio kurihara

RAINBOW
(DRAG CITY)

These two albums feature Japan's s Kurihara, best known as the guitarist for **GHOST** and **WHITE HEAVEN**. For the latest release under his name, he recorded nine tracks at sunset on different days with a bassist and drummer. Most are instrumentals ranging from strident, full-on shredders to delicate melodic workouts. Quicksilver Messenger Service's John Cipollina influenced Kurihara, and you can hear it in the smooth, fluid tones he gets from his guitar, even when distorted to the max. While the upbeat numbers are nice, especially great are the more placid songs, including two featuring female vocalist **AI ASO**, that recall his sublime collaborations with **DAMON & NAOMI**. (20-20-20.com)

His collaboration with heavy dronester Boris, *Rainbow* is equally enjoyable, opening with a heavy screecher that somehow retains a meditative calmness—like being in the hurricane's eye. The remaining cuts contain vocals and instrumentals and similarly explore the areas between bombast and contemplation. While the upbeat songs here are more interesting than Kurihara's solo CD, the softer cuts aren't as beautiful. So followers of experimental guitar music and lovers of the more extreme ends of pop music should check out both CDs. (dragcity.com)

the magic numbers

THOSE THE BROKES
(ASTRALWERKS)

This English brother/sister foursome start their latest CD with a machine-like propulsion that could be Death Cab for Cutie, until **ROMEO STODART** starts singing and the female harmonies kick in on the chorus—then it could only be The Magic Numbers. Divided between soulful slow songs and upbeat light rock, it all sounds pretty middle of the road until their special recipe of sonic confection reveals itself, and the lush sounds start making sense in a pleasantly addictive way. The slow melancholic songs share the same rich English pop territory with Prefab Sprout: velvety male and female vocals against a grand orchestrated background. It's harmless pop fluffery with enough backbone to keep it interesting. (astralwerks.com)

bob marley & the wailers

ROOTS, ROCK, REMIXED
(TUFF GONG)

These posthumous Marley remix CDs are mostly for the fans who know these songs inside out, and still want more. Dubbing the