

concludes this Cincinnati four on the opening "Andy's Room," summing up their third album's danceable "gypsy rock." They're truly all over the place stylistically, but their attitude is geared towards being a ready for action party band, from R&B-ish rock like "Beautiful Thing," to the rockabilly stray cat strut of "Crash and Burn," to the whispery country folk nods of "Bad Idea" (giving way to Texas blues guitar noodling), to white-funky deliveries such as "Moon," "Stop," and the title track. And as master of ceremonies, **DYLAN SPEEG** has something of a hard-voiced drawl, somewhere between Danny Elfman as Oogie Boogie (especially), Brian Setzer, and head B-52 Fred Schneider. Crank up the kegger. (buckra.com)

by blood alone

SEAS OF BLOOD

(JERICHO HILL/RELAPSE)

This Portland, ME (the *other* Portland) quintet are "progressive metal," but that portrayal misses their clashing goth leanings. They don't comfortably burrow in prescribed genres (although "Nidhogg" sounds like Styx). Instead, BBA rattles comfort zones on their first LP with an odd confluence of Black Sabbath Tony Iommi licks as if played like Santana, icy church keyboards (or graveyard piano or accordion), Neil Peart (Rush) drums, and a brave female (with saucy braided big hair) named **CRUELLA** bawling like a spawn of Lene Lovich, Siouxsie Sioux, Nina Hagen, and Anja Huwe (Xmal Deutschland). No, not for prevailing in a scary breast cancer battle, but listening to this, it's easy to understand she takes no trash. It's her resolute carriage—and **JOHN GRAVESIDE**'s lead guitar—that makes one think she and band are not easily trifled with. (bybloodalone.com)

cartoon monster

THE DYING SEA

(NOWHERENESS)

Because it's cheap and simple to record music now, there's a "sea" of solo laundry room Phil Spector. But Portland, OR by way of Maui, HI's (yes, he gave up paradise) **TORY FITERRE** wasn't waiting for technology to ease his way. This is actually his 10th LP going back to 1999, when he only clutched a cassette 8-track. Presently upgraded to 8-track digital, his latest remains unvarnished in sound and nicely whacked in construction. If he grew up digging *The Wall*, it's actually the "off" quality of Pink Floyd's lost leader Syd Barrett (an uncredited freak-folk founder) solo that registers, as his barely picked guitars and dream-like, oddball-mumbler vocals are bent by mild psychedelia, childlike bells, and bits of white noise space pop. It's like you're listening with a contact high in a room full of weed—it's wonderfully strange. (nowhereness.com)

caspian

THE FOUR TRESS (DOUBLE ALBUM VINYL)

(MYLENE SHEATH)

Originally released on CD last April on Dopamine, this newer, absolutely gorgeous

double-disc gatefold Mylene Sheath vinyl issue truly re-establishes the pre-digital connection between the art of the music, and the visual splendor of a great 24" sleeve package. It sounds like the analog mastering is no cheapo job, either—a single album spread over two discs to insure maximum fidelity—perfect for a wondrously ethereal debut album by this greater-Boston (Beverly, MA) instrumental quintet. With shoegaze dissonance, feedback gales, glistening guitars, thrusting drums, and throbbing vistas, Caspian is some whitecap sea between Henry Frayne's equally commanding *Lantern*, *The Dears* without vocals, "She Calls" *Slowdive*, and "View From a Hill" *Chameleons*. You feel like you're skiing pristine Alps or investigating Greenland glaciers on *The Four Trees*, its chilly beauty as imposing and unassailable as an IMAX Antarctica movie. (mylenesheath.com)

don cavalli

CRYLAND

(EVERLOVING)

From the 1963 British Invasion to Amy Winehouse, it's clear Europeans are actually better versed in our '50s/'60s blues, R&B, boogie woogie, rockabilly, soul, and rock 'n' roll than us! Sad, I know, but here's another example, a shakin' swamp blues LP from a new French artist (singing in l'anglais). Like Winehouse, without a photo you'd swear Cavalli was 60, black, and American southern. With a great syrupy voice like a soul brother Johnny Rivers or Tim Hardin, he puts a funky spin on New Orleans voodoo, as if some harmonica and wah-wah pedal guitarist demon was down on the bayou with Swamp Dog, Dr. John, Neville Brothers, Lee Dorsey, Lloyd Price, and Larry Williams. Ile-de-France (Greater Paris) may be a long way from the Big Easy, but Cavalli makes it *sound* easy, with a rough and ready, fuzzy soul full of spicy red beans on rice and muddy gumbo. (everloving.com)

ciam

ANONYMOUS

(CIAM)

Tiring of insipid indie rock, these London art rockers provide rousing respite. The product of Brits of arts and design backgrounds, Ciam's futuristic widescreen wall of sound, paranoid android film music is what you'd get if you diced Radiohead, Sigur Ros, Tubeway Army, Stranglers, and The Doves into a galactic glaze, with spacey spices of **VELVET UNDERGROUND** and David Bowie acknowledged via an electropop reworking of **LOU REED**'s 1967 *The Velvet Underground & Nico* classic "Venus in Furs." In fact, on the standout opener "Here I Am," **HADAR GOLDMAN** plays John Cale to frontman **JEFF SHAPIRO**'s vision via a gnarly but pretty viola solo. Whenever he plays that or violin, Goldman adds an elliptical element to the bigger than life keyboards, billowing guitar shadings, and rollover repetition. *Anonymous* is moody as all get out, and its nervous ambiances capture a slice o' the times. (ciam.co.uk)

the condors

WAIT FOR IT

(RANKOUTSIDER)

This L.A. foursome are great high force power-pop/garage rockers with songs so catchy, they seem to echo from bygone fertile eras. Perhaps they do, since they're penned and sung by **PAT DiPUCCIO**, known for 30 years as **Pooch**, co-founder of the late *Flipside* fanzine. Our Pooch-y writes with the standards of someone who's inhaled this stuff for decades, but his band hits like 20-somethings that mag fervently covered. One detects a dose of 1978-1987 Saints in the soul horns of "Set Me on Fire" (more next time!), and like The Condors' debut *Tales of Drunkenness and Cruelty* EP (named after a **KINKS** lyric from "Sunny Afternoon"), the '65 Byrds/'77 Flamin' Groovies ringing guitars of "Kiss That Girl Away" and *Nuggets* stylings of "Don't Want a Girl Who's Been With Jack" (hey now!!!) exhibit range. All good, given Pooch's thickened pipes, canny Jam-to-Joe Jackson hooks, entertaining lyrics, and the group's loose, ballsy playing. (rankoutsiderrecords.com)

dead boys

RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD BOYS; HALLOWEEN NIGHT 1986

(MVD VISUAL)

Having DJed this Ritz gig 22 years ago, this writer spent the performance standing next to the cameraguy in the back near the DJ booth, little knowing that: 1) It would be the *final* reunion, as singer **STIV BATORS** wound up hit by a laundry truck in Paris, June 2, 1990, dead at 40 (not counting gigs without him since, like CBGB two years ago), and 2) that I'd be watching his footage 22 years later! Ha! All I thought then was that the great, filthy punk quintet had been younger, louder, and snottier in their late '70s heyday at the Rock 'n' Roll Flea Market at Hotel Diplomat and a slam-bang blowout at Dover, NJ's Showplace. That said, they seem better rehearsed than memory argued (although after years in **LORDS OF THE NEW CHURCH**, Bators' voice *had* grown raspy-thin), and the history mitigates this document's limitation: turns out my cameraguy was the *only* cameraguy, so *Return* fights long-distance stage lighting. So don't trade this for vintage CBGB films in their (and punk's) prime. Yet it shows that darting **CHEETAH CHROME** and fabbo **JIMMY ZERO** were a hell of a 1-2 punch over **JOHNNY BLITZ**'s big drums right to the end, and that Chrome's **ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS**-era tunes such as "What Love Is," "Sonic Reducer" (twice), and "Caught With the Meat in Your Mouth" were *hot* stuff. Bonuses include interviews and a "Sonic Reducer" video. (mvdvisual.com)

the december sound

THE SILVER ALBUM

(THE DECEMBER SOUND)

(by **BEN VENDETTA**) Sounding like a cross between The Verve, *Honey's Dead*-era Jesus & Mary Chain, and Primal Scream circa *Xtrmntr*, Boston's December Sound give the