

Iron & Wine

"Kiss Each Other Clean"

Weird-beard folkie Sam Beam's new album opens up some new avenues, namely the addition of a wider palette of electronics lightly punctuating his accessible and homespun pop songs. There are also some touches of jazz and funk, showing Beam is shedding his folk roots further. Old fans may be upset at the more commercial sound here, but this is a perfect summer pop album for these sweltering afternoons. (Warner Bros)



Jakalope

"Things That Go Jump In The Night"

What the hell happened here? Known best for his work with industrial-horror pioneers Skinny Puppy (and to a lesser degree, Nine Inch Nails), producer extraordinaire Dave "Rave" Ogilvie's new band is squeaky-clean radio pop, complete with teen-sheen singer whose vocals resemble Gwen Stefani, if you're into that kinda thing. Ehh, no. (604 Records)



Johann Johannsson

"The Miners' Hymns"

This Icelandic composer creates lush and beautiful modern classical soundtracks, and this latest work is subtle and ambient, in a similar minimalist vein as Philip Glass or Arvo Part. There's a lot of nuance here, with strings and brass assembling themselves tastefully alongside moody electronics, and plenty of space between the notes. If this is a requiem for the mining industry, it's quite a lovely one. (130701 Records)
— **Todd Zacharitz** 40



Crone

"Endless Midnight"

(Translation Loss)

★★★★★



Jeff Caxide (formerly of progressive post-metal bands ISIS and Red Sparowes) returns anew with this project, and it's a continuation of the ambient textures that his former bands experimented with. Virtually gone are the thundering riffage (though it's hinted at here), and the grunted vocals. In fact, Crone is entirely instrumental. But it works beautifully, almost leaving behind the "rock" tendencies completely.

Opening with the Stars Of The Lid-style drones of "What You Dream Of", Caxide explores rich and sonorous soundtrack music. The album's highlight has to be "The Silver Hammer", which begins all lush and ambient, gradually building up to something larger, heavier, and monolithic, finally evolving into a shimmering shoegaze-drone-meets-riff soundscape. Absolutely wonderful! "Cellar Holes From A Lifetime Ago" is a floating set of tones and drones, and the title track is another mellow track that wouldn't be out of place on an old 4AD Records compilation.

More ambient and soundtrack-oriented than his previous bands, Caxide proves he's

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capable of many moods and textures. "Endless Midnight" is a fine album that shows the future is bright for this ISIS progeny/offshoot.
— **Todd Zachritz**

Kate Bush

"A Life Of Surprises - The Story So Far"

(Pride DVD)

★★★★★



Having been only peripherally aware of Kate Bush, this examination of the work of the visionary English artist and songwriter was a fine education for me. In fact, now I know where Tori Amos, Joanna Newsom, and Bjork nicked some of their signature moves!

The first disc, previously released as "Kate Bush - Under Review", is a lengthy and detailed bio, complete with plenty of video clips and interviews with journalists and biographers. There are critical appraisals of all of Kate Bush's major albums, from "Wuthering Heights" in 1978 to her 2005 "Aerial" album. "Under Review" provides a wealth of info and history, and with the generous portion of visual and audio clips, a good illustration of the artists' music and styles. Quite enjoyable.

The second disc, previously known as "Hounds Of Love - Under