



### Zach Hill & Mick Barr

*Shred Earthship*  
SRC

A collaborative effort between renowned Hella/Team Sleep drummer Zach Hill and Orthrelm's Mick Barr, *Shred Earthship* displays an immense amount of technical flair, but the ultimate result amasses to nothing more than a taxing piece of self-important boasting. Don't get me wrong, at times I've enjoyed both members' alternate projects, but when it comes to the current one, all of the structural benefits, spastic pulses, and dynamic shifts of their other comparative endeavors are smeared out by sheer narcissism. This is an example of a record that should be kept personal. For the creators, I'm sure it's monumental in that "look what we can do" type of way, but for the rest of us, a similar experience could be derived from masturbating into a microphone or taking a trip down to the local Guitar Center to listen to some washed up, almost-made-it forty something metal head showcase his abilities by out-riffing a helpless group of teenage boys. If a hipster band geek told me they liked this, I'd believe them; anyone else, I'd call a liar. —BM

### Hymns

*Brother/Sister*  
Blackland Records

At first listen, this North Carolina band sounds remarkably like early R.E.M. with its lyrical, guitar strumming sound. The songs on their debut release *Brother Sister* have a certain quirkiness — a bit country, a bit rock and roll with an edge of punk. With a Neil Young whine, the band delivers tracks that are rather simplistic both lyrically and musically. While tracks such as "Magazine" and "Power in the Street" have addictive driving drum beats (causing the listener to want to dive into a mosh pit), tracks such as "C'mon, C'mon" have little if no movement to them. The album is inconsistent; the band seems to have so many influences that it is impossible to note who and what Hymns is. This is not to say that the band is without merit

— the vocals of Jason Abraham Roberts are melodic and hypnotic, and the drum beat of Matthew Gregory Cole possesses a certain strength and clear talent. Hymns is a young band with the potential to be a great band. Time will tell. —ERF

### Jr. Ewing

*Maelstrom*  
Dim Mak Records

The long-standing Norwegian post-hardcore outfit Jr. Ewing has recently announced that this coming fall, after eight years, they'll be throwing in the towel. Fortunately, they've left us all with a farewell gift. Following their 2003 GSL release, the band lapsed for some time, returning in 2005 with the European release of *Maelstrom*. Now, Dim Mak has licensed the record for a U.S. release. Borrowing a good portion of their moves from their now-defunct Swedish neighbors, Refused, on their current release Jr. Ewing retains their sense of melodic heaviness while also expanding outward into tech-savvy progressive elements. Showcasing rare ability, the band constructs and executes trickery with machine-like precision without compromising the unity of their songs. With *Maelstrom*, Jr. Ewing raises the bar, bringing new inventions and concoctions into play. Alas, as it so often goes, the good die young. —BM

### KRS-ONE

*Life*  
Antagonist

The teacher is back. KRS busts through the door with his high energy socio-political lectures and after he gets the silliness of "Bling Blung," out of the way (where I assume he's questioning the hip-hop soul and its pursuit of bling), he's off and running. The former leader of Boogie Down Productions has always been about telling it like it is. His rubbery floetry stands out more than ever in a world where more and more MCs all sound the same. "Woke Up" slaps us upside the head with its quick-time rhymes and flamenco guitar flourishes. "Fucked Up" harkens back to the early

## REVIEWS, ETC.

moby.  
live



### Moby

*Hotel Tour 2005*  
Mute

Moby has chosen to surround himself with extremely competent and superior musicians including vocalist Laura Dawn. While much of Moby's newer music contains samples from gospel or choirs, Dawn handles most of these live. Her soaring vocals bring an organic feel to the performance, where a sample would be out of its element. This concert and film are considerably different than others I've seen recently. It's filmed beautifully, unlike those that look like the last person in had a camcorder taped to their hand. It's also a polite show filmed in front of 6,000 Belgians. When the music stops, the crowd becomes quiet, listening intently to each word spoken by the man onstage and when Moby is ready for another song, he says 'Thank you'. *Hotel Tour 2005* contains a tight and precise 24 song set spanning old and new. The set covers Moby's genre bending catalog with guitar driven, techno/dance and karma-searching songs one after another without clashing. A highlight of the show is the unexpected cover of Lou Reed's 'Walk on the Wild Side.' An additional three live bonus tracks, five videos and two intimate features and a Moby-produced 13 track remix CD come on the extensive DVD. If you've never seen the video for *Beautiful* with footage of an all animal party about to tragically end, it's worth it just for the stuffing. —JJ

THE SMITHS



### The Smiths

*Under Review*  
MVD/Sexy Intellectual

This is a comprehensive look at the career of a highly influential and dividing band - The Smiths. Right from the starting gate, Starting with the choice of their name, they planted their feet firmly in the dirt of anti-establishment. In contrast to this stance, they still were able to write incredible catchy songs and appeal to the masses. This DVD is a critical documentary that looks at the facts and analyzes the entertaining outcomes. The Smiths story is told by the producers, radio men and label heads who were there. They point to Morrissey's 'lonely boy in a bedroom' appeal as the lynchpin for success. His intimate lyrics and choices for album covers set The Smiths apart from the larger bands of the mid '80s. Stirring controversy also helped propel them into stardom whether it was the mistaken ideals of 'Suffer Little Children', Morrissey's sexual orientation, or socio-political issues. They were in charge from the start, but the documentary is sharp to show that they didn't always come upon their greatest achievements without a little direction. Producer John Porter played a large part in their early recordings and was promptly fired after being the driving force behind The Smiths' most well known song. When the band began producing their own tracks is when they truly became dangerous and the sound caught up with their talent. Added bonuses are 'The Hardest Smiths Quiz in the World', contributor biographies and additional interviews including one with the fifth Smith. —JJ