

*Essential* doesn't suggest we've missed great leaps since two excellent singles, "Flood" and "Liquid" (with its monastic chants and insistent chorus, "This is the one thing that I know") from their 1995 debut. Both tracks were distinguished by **ADRIAN BELEW**'s deft production. This shouldn't imply *Essential* isn't fun or Jars didn't evolve. Fan favorites such as "Coffee Song" are welcome. Solid singles like "Work" from 2006's *Good Monsters* find Jars pursuing a more aggressive rock style favored by younger fans of bands like Switchfoot. "Dead Man (Carry Me)" suggests secondhand inspiration by Gang of Four via Franz Ferdinand.

jerusalem

JERUSALEM

(JERUSALEM)

Give credit to **MICHAEL S. JUDGE**. His one-man band's progressive rock brims with ambition and creative arrangements, drawing on the genre's hard-driving classics. "Silent Steps" references Rush's arc from *2112* to *Hemispheres*. A cover of "Masters of War" draws more from **ELP**'s expansive art-rock than **BOB DYLAN**'s righteously indignant original. Judge falters on execution, however; *Jerusalem* sounds clearly homemade, and could have benefited from an able producer's assistance. Though his guitar leads and analog synthesizer riffs are assured and adventurous, the mix is frequently unpolished and out of balance, with random elements pushing awkwardly forward. Judge, quite frankly, isn't a gifted singer - a forgivable shortcoming when conviction and character are offered instead of technical prowess. They aren't. Nonetheless, 20-year-old Judge shows promise. (myspace.com/jerusalemtheband)

carole.king

TAPESTRY: LEGACY EDITION (DOUBLE CD)

(LEGACY/SONYBMG)

King's timeless 1971 album *Tapestry* embodies that rare sort of perfection that doesn't really need a deluxe reissue to improve it or remind anyone of its brilliance. But what the heck—Legacy was obviously interested in highlighting one of their catalog's best, and took great care: the remaster sounds superb. Rockers, including the sensual "I Feel the Earth Move" and the rollicking "Smackwater Jack", get a power boost. Sentimental fare such as "So Far Away" and "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" have an enhanced sense of intimacy. A second disc features live versions of everything but the dutiful (and perhaps uncharacteristically anti-feminist) "Where You Lead." Piano-vocal versions of "It's Too Late" and "(You Make Me Feel Like) a Natural Woman" are still pop knockouts.

ours

OURS

(AMERICAN)

For my money, Ours hasn't produced anything as immediately gripping as its 2001 debut single "Sometimes," but this sampler finds **JIMMY GNECCO**'s skills as a musical dramatist in full flush. "Mercy" rumbles and thunders with menacing, aggressive bass lifted from The Cure's "Fascination Street," as pounding drums channel rafter-rattling U2 beats and chiming guitars pay homage to Radiohead. Gnecco seeks "mercy for the meek" with a sense of desperation that suggests tough odds finding it. Truth be known, Ours could be stripped to Gnecco's bare voice, and the howling "what's life for a dream" chorus of "Ran Away to Tell the World" would still raise goose bumps. Jeff Buckley's influence can still be heard in the dervish wail of "Murder," but Gnecco style is now his own.

over the rhines

NOW ANGELS

(GREAT SPECKLED DOG)

*Snow Angels* is occasionally lighthearted, as during "One Olive Jingle" with its skewed take on "Jingle Bells." Elsewhere, vocalist **KARIN BERGQUIST** melts wintry icicles with her Billie Holiday croon on "All I Ever Get for Christmas is Blue" and the sultry "Snowed in with You." **LINFORD DETWEILER**'s assured piano flourishes are featured during the title cut, echoing a story of wartime love and loss, while "New Redemption Song" features his rousing gospel organ. The group extends homage to **VINCE GUARALDI TRIO**'s *Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown* score with "Goodbye Charles," and "Little Town" reimagines the carol "O Little Town of Bethlehem," adding lyrics that speak to the best promises of the holiday. If more artists resolved to create seasonal fare with this sense of originality, perhaps we could enjoy Christmas albums on their own merits. (OvertheRhine.com)

the residents

THE VOICE OF MIDNIGHT

(MUTE)

Here, The Residents create one of the best recent releases in their 35-year career. 19th century Prussian author **E.T.A. HOFFMAN** is arguably best known through those he influenced, such as Tchaikovsky, Poe, Dickens, Kafka, Carl Jung, and **FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE**. Nietzsche's 1919 essay *Die Unheimliche (The Uncanny)* was partially based upon Hoffman's *Der Sandmann*, as is this LP. Our protagonist is biology student **NATHANIEL**, who imagines oppression by the sinister **SANDMAN**—a shadowy figure who finds joy only in the love returned when feeding stolen eyeballs to his owl-beaked children. Nathaniel's relationships unravel as he attempts to cling to eroding sanity and protect others. The music is unsettling, creepy and ultimately

very effective. The surprise ending isn't necessarily happy. ["Enter Sandman?"—ed.] (mute.com)

rockfour

MEMORIES OF THE NEVER HAPPENED

(COOKING VINYL)

Israeli psych-rockers Rockfour climax their second decade together, drawing on sources including The Who, Byrds, early Pink Floyd, David Bowie, Beach Boys, and beyond. "Old Village House" begins as a somber blues with nods to The Zombies and Kinks, before careening into a noisy progressive rock excursion a la *Gabrielera* Genesis. Buzzing sitar-like tones and slide guitar on "Dear Truth" join chiming 12-string Rickenbacker during "Goes Around" in homage to George Harrison (and maybe even Flaming Lips). *Memories'* new wrinkle is the departure of vocalist **ELU LULAI**. The group survives the shift thanks to Rockfour's long-standing emphasis on close harmonies, and because guitarist **BARUCH BEN YITZHAK** has stepped forward with airy, dreamlike singing arguably better suited to the group's foundational mod influences. (rockfour.com)

the rolling stones

UNDER REVIEW (DVD)

(SEXY INTELLECTUAL/MVD VISUAL)

The appeal of this artist-unauthorized series is its academic approach, and tidbits gleaned from "those who were there." This entry focuses on the Stones' pivotal years 1967-1969, as the band tried pop and psychedelia, found its voice on *Beggars Banquet* and *Let it Bleed*, and grappled with the destructive influence of the ill-fated Altamont Speedway show. Though the film features concert footage of performances including "Satisfaction" and "Gimme Shelter," most of its time is devoted to talking heads like former *Rolling Stone* editor **ANTHONY DECURTIS** and **ROBERT CHRISTGAU**. Biographer **ALAN CLAYSON** casts the pivotal single "Ruby Tuesday" as the Stones' "Yesterday." He also emphasizes founding guitarist **BRIAN JONES**' role as the song's creator, though it was eventually credited solely to **JAGGER/RICHARDS!** (mvdvisual.com)

simon dawes

CARNIVORE

(RECORD COLLECTION)

Simon Dawes (the band, not the person) is currently inactive; *Carnivore* was actually released in 2006. But it was sent to us now, and comparison to labelmates **THE WALKMEN** sparked interest, as did other influences ranging from the Kinks to Pavement, Big Star, and The Band (audible during "Salute the Institution"). "Save Your Ticket" delivers, with lo-fi pop melodicism perhaps better compared to Spoon. **TAYLOR GOLDSMITH** (who with bassist **WYLIE GELBER** has since launched a spin-off called **DAWES**) has great pipes for visceral