



Various Artists

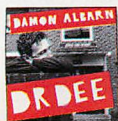
Occupy This Album Razor & Tie

★★★★

From Tom Morello to Mogwai, a grab bag of righteous rage

This 99-track *Occupy* benefit shows how far beyond Sixties folk lefty rabble-rousing has come, with hip-hop, electronica and indie rock sitting alongside Pete Seeger and Joan Baez. The comp's high point is unexpectedly ambivalent: the slow-build amp howl of Mogwai's "Earth Division" leading into the battle rattle of the *Occupy Wall Street* drummers – a one-two punch designed to strike at the rotten heart of capitalism.

JON DOLAN



Damon Albarn

Dr Dee Virgin

★★½

Blur frontman gets lost at the Renaissance faire

On this solo joint, the ever-adventuring Gorillaz and Blur frontman gets together with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra and Nigerian drummer Tony Allen for an operatic salute to mysterious Elizabethan alchemist John Dee. An ambitious and unexpected move, sure, but the mix of period strings, vocal choruses and West African percussion (plus Albarn's gloomy score) makes for a dense term paper.

J.D.



Rhett Miller

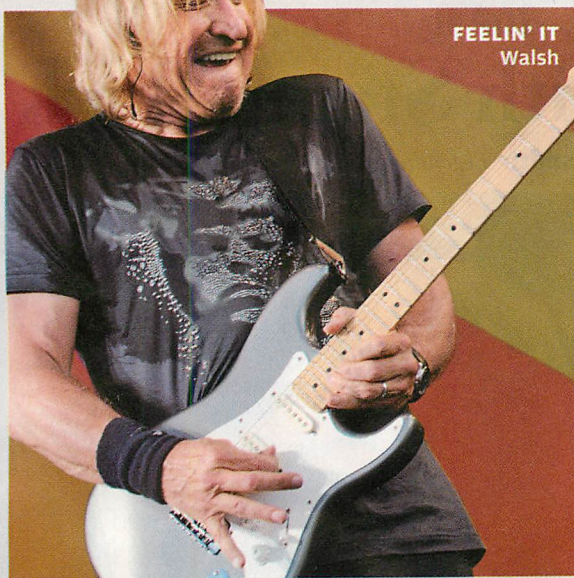
The Dreamer Maximum Sunshine

★★★★½

Old 97's guy tackles love with wit, wisdom and ace melodies

There are flashier singer-songwriters than Rhett Miller. But are there better ones? On his fifth solo album, the alt-country stalwart delivers 13 sharp, shapey roots-rock songs, with flashes of surf rock and Brill Building pop surfacing amid the usual twang. As frontman of the Old 97's, Miller always sounded like an old soul; now, at 41, he wears his hard-won wisdom like a pair of old jeans.

JODY ROSEN



FEELIN' IT
Walsh

Still Slinging Riffs and Takin' It Easy

On his solo LP, Joe Walsh turns in laid-back Cali rock and makes the most of sobriety

Joe Walsh *Analog Man* Fantasy/Concord ★★★★★



"Welcome to cyberspace/I'm lost in a fog," 64-year-old veteran guitar slinger and part-time Eagle Joe Walsh sings on the amiably cantankerous title track to his first solo record in 20 years. I.T. issues notwithstanding, life's clearly been pretty good to Walsh: He's sober ("One

Day at a Time"), loves his family ("Family") and still has good command of his guitar chops (check out "Funk 50," a reinvention of the James Gang's 1970 killer "Funk #49," complete with new, care-free lyrics). And Jeff Lynne's production on several tracks (especially the sweet, stock-taking "Lucky That Way") puts a Tom Petty-ready spin on laid-back California rock and has Walsh sounding less isolated from modern times than he thinks he is.

J.D.

KEY TRACKS:
"Funk 50,"
"Family"

ON THE RECORD

RS: Your last solo album came in 1992. What took you so long to make another?

Walsh: The Eagles got back to work and went around the world a couple of times, and I also got sober. I had to rebuild Joe from the bottom up and learn to do everything without vodka.

RS: How was it working sober?

Walsh: It's not a party. It's work. I get more done in the daytime. My lyrics aren't abstract, and I'm not hiding behind my humor. I'm letting people know who the real Joe is, now that I know. It's a little scary.

RS: It's called *Analog Man*. Did you record it analog?

Walsh: No, we recorded it digitally. I'm not saying I'm an old fart who came out of the woods

and is saying analog is better. It's not a judgment. I do know this technology ate the record business, and it ate intellectual property, and I hope it doesn't eat me.

RS: I assume "Funk 50" is a takeoff on "Funk #49," by your old band the James Gang.

Walsh: Last year ESPN called me up and said, "We want a song that sounds like 'Funk #49,' but not that exact song."

RS: Is it more fulfilling to work solo than in the Eagles?

Walsh: Being a part of a band is fulfilling, and Don [Henley] and Glenn [Frey] come up with great stuff to play to. But it's nice to be able to get my brains onto a CD. I think I'm back. It's not going to be another 20 years until the next one.

ANDY GREENE



Azealia Banks

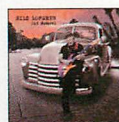
1091 EP Interscope/Geffen/A&M

★★★★½

Hot-shit New York rapper sets off a housequake

The long-awaited debut EP from this Harlem MC is four tracks – including her breakthrough single, "212," and more shit talk than you'd get at a Friday-night nail salon – that spin hip-hop backward and forward. Banks kicks things off with chatty Franglais rhymes, but she also quotes A Tribe Called Quest and spits fire over bulbous deep-house jams cooked up by progressive Brooklyn producer Machinedrum. More, please.

WILL HERMES



Nils Lofgren

Old School Vision Music

★★★★

Springsteen guitarist gets charmingly cranky on solo LP

Before he hit the road for Bruce Springsteen's latest tour, Nils Lofgren made this weird, funny, crabby LP about seemingly everything that annoys him: Congress, yoga, lattes, sexting, any teen "dressed like a whore." Lofgren switches from acoustic ballads to Stonish rock, where his voice turns craggy and stubbly. He's found the trick to aging well: a bit of rage, a lot of love, and the ability to laugh at yourself.

ROB TANNENBAUM



Sigur Rós

Valtari XL

★★★★½

The Icelanders' chilliest LP, with effects and quiet grandeur

Nothing much happens on the instrumental title track of Sigur Rós' latest LP, but it's a layered, gorgeous nothing, lush with nuanced drift and harmonic sweetness. It's the set piece of the group's mellowest LP. Jonsi's exquisite vocals evoke prayers or lullabies, while pecked-out piano melodies play amid dulcimer tones, sonar burps, elf choirs. It's like sacred music of a religion sans dogma or proscriptions. w.h.