

CD ReVIEW ReVIEW ReVIEW ReVIEW

Here are some short reviews of a handful of the new releases that we've been enjoying down here at Tape Op headquarters. Many of these artists are the ones who will be making the cool sounds of tomorrow, so support them! -LC

NINE INCH NAILS *Ghosts I-IV* 36 songs, nearly 2 hours of music, \$5 to download, \$10 two CD set, \$75 for the deluxe set (with full multitracks) or tracks 1-9 for free. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike license, you can redistribute or remix this work (as long as credit is given and financial gain isn't achieved). We're now seeing the future of music distribution? Right? Then again, major labels aren't clamoring for 2 hour-long instrumental albums. "The rules were as follows: 10 weeks, no clear agenda, no overthinking, everything driven by impulse. The team: Atticus Ross, Alan Moulder and myself [Trent Reznor] with some help from Alessandro Cortini, Adrian Belew and Brian Viglione. Rob Sheridan collaborated with Artist in Residence (A+R) to create the accompanying visual and physical aesthetic. We began improvising and let the music decide the direction. Eyes were closed, hands played instruments and it began. Within a matter of days it became clear we were on to something, and a lot of material began appearing. What we thought could be a five song EP became much more. I invited some friends over to join in and we all enjoyed the process of collaborating on this." It's actually some cool pieces, sets a mood and hangs in it for a while. "More volumes of Ghosts are likely to appear in the future." Seems like a plan. (ghosts.nin.com) -LC

ANDERSON BRUFORD WAKEMAN HOWE *An Evening of Yes Music Plus* I've been on a twisted Yes-a-thon for the last few months. I can't explain it, and it drives my girlfriend crazy, but I've been having a blast rocking out to their proggy tunes. This CD and DVD release is from a 1989 concert at the Shoreline Amphitheatre, Mountain View, California, featuring Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe - 4/5ths of the classic Yes lineup (minus bassist Chris Squire). I got this thinking it might be the dregs of the Yes catalog, but damn, once I could see past the mullets and bad suits, the revisiting of classic material ("Close to the Edge", "Heart of the Sunrise"), top musicianship and excellent video and sound quality actually had me growing fond of this release. "Audio recording engineers" are Guy Charbonneau and David Roberts, indicating it was probably captured by Guy's Le Mobile truck. Mix engineer John Harris does a great job as well. Check this out - it may become one of your guilty pleasures too. (www.voiceprint.co.uk) -LC

MATMOS *Supreme Balloon* The delightful duo of Drew Daniel and M. C. Schmidt (issue #23) issue the decree: "The creative restriction this time around is that *Supreme Balloon* is an ALL synthesizer album and no microphones were used at any point." Synths by the likes of Arp, Korg, Roland, Waldorf, Moog, ElectroComp, Doepfer, Akai, Dubreq Stylophone and a Suzuki Omnichord show up. Even the "Coupigny" modular synthesizer INA-GRM (Institut National Audiovisuel, Groupe de Recherches Musicales) at Radio France in Paris shows up here. Recorded at home in San Francisco, California, as well as the SnowGhost Studio in Whitefish, Montana, and finished off in Baltimore, Maryland - where the group is living these days. Guests include Marshall Allen of the Sun Ra Arkestra, Jon Leidecker (aka Wobbly), Jay Lesser, Keith Fullerton Whitman and pianist Sarah Cahill. It reminds me of early Kraftwerk or Cluster at times - I'm way into this new album as it's so different from a lot of what I've come across lately. (brainwashed.com/matmos) -LC

RAFTER *Sex, Death, Cassette* Rafter is Rafter Roberts (issue #28) from San Deigo where his company, Singing Serpent, is based. Here's another CD by him of incredibly catchy, distorted, short, fun music. Inside it says, "4-track power forever, multiplied by computer power." I asked him about the recording process and got this back: "Jammin' hard Soundelux U99 into a Tascam 424 MKIV, sometimes a Shure SM7 for vox. I recorded about 100 instrumental tracks to work from in super fast un-pre-meditated jam-out afternoons and evenings. Dumped into the 'puter, and then went back thru and started editing and overdubbing. Not a lot of high track counts. Mostly the drums n' guitars and percussions were on the 4-track, and most of the vox n' bass were into the computer. I did lots of bouncing on the 4-track to give things that squishy quality - I wanted some Joe Meek-a-phonics. Oh, and my big happiness was recording drums n' guitars with dbx on and mixing with it off for extra high end and compression. I didn't touch my Culture Vulture for anything - all the distortion is on the cassette tape, but actually sometimes I used CamelCrusher (TOTALLY AMAZING FREE PLUG FOR DIST/COMP) on some of the digital overdubs to nice them up." Sound like a fun time, right? (www.asthmatickitty.com) -LC

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Sensory Lullabies: The Ultimate Tribute to Jellyfish Yup*, 35 tracks of 35 artists covering the entirety of Jellyfish's two albums (in order) plus bonus tracks. It's mostly unknown artists, but a majority of them do a fairly good job of capturing the sound and feel of the original tracks - though none really seem to get all the way to Jack Joseph Puig's masterful production work on those albums. One thought I had while listening to this is how the digital recording revolution has placed much more powerful tools in more folk's hands. Fifteen years ago a collection like this would not have sounded as strong as it does, unless every artist had access to "real" recording studios. Plus the interaction that can take place - I would imagine the mastering engineer (and co-producer/art design) can ask for remixes and give advice where needed to make the CD as cohesive as possible. Speaking of computers, this whole project would have never come together without MySpace's networking capabilities. Long Tail indeed. (www.myspace.com/burningskyrecords) -LC

THE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA AND TRA-LA-LA BAND *13 Blues for Thirteen Moons* I was in Montreal last October, and had the pleasure of seeing this band perform/improvise live with Patti Smith in a Ukrainian church. I ended up meeting the band (and Patti!) and went out for late night drinks with them and Howard Bilerman (issue #47) who owns/runs Hotel2tango along with Efrim Menuck and Thierry Amar of this band [and formerly of Godspeed! You Black Emperor] and Radwan Moumneh, their soundman. I have to say these are some of the most pleasant people to be around, and to see them live is a must. They create something very unique, spiritual and strong - and it feels as if its creation is taken very seriously. This album is their fifth, and it captures them in a quite perfect way. Twelve little feedback bites slip by as song ID points, and then at track 13 we start four songs, none of which clock in at less than 13 minutes. Welcome to *13 Blues*... Howard and Radwan "recorded" the album at Hotel2tango (of course) onto 24-track tape (Studer A820) "blessed by the hands of Mr. Greg Norman" with "lots of bouncing." Harris Newman mastered the album at Grey Market, which is located in the same building as Constellation Records (they released this CD) and the Hotel2tango. Do you get a nice sense of community from all this? Exactly. Visit Montreal, go see Silver Mt. Zion live and check out some of their intense recordings - you'll find it all worthwhile. (www.cstrecords.com) -LC

BIG DIPPER *Supercluster: The Big Dipper Anthology* From 1985 to 1992 this Boston band proved to be a worthy listen. I remember picking up their first EP, *Boo-Boo*, back when it came out and reveling in the powerful pop hooks of "Faith Healer." With three CDs, extensive liner notes, a video and tons of unreleased bonus tracks, this is the kind of reissue that record collectors crave - though the absence of their album *Slam*, their foray into the world of major labels, makes this set incomplete. But for \$15 it makes sense that anyone who was interested in this band would fork out the cash (instead of downloading or whatever) so that they could have the whole package to peruse. It's nice that labels like Merge "get" it in these regards. (www.mergerecords.com) -LC

VARIOUS ARTISTS *Song of America* Fifty artists, fifty songs - all about America from 1492 to the present. Artists like The Blind Boys of Alabama, Malcolm Holcombe, Marah, Janis Ian, Andrew Bird, Danielson, Jim Lauderdale, Devendra Banhart, Del McCoury, Bettye LaVette and John Mellencamp are but a few who cover songs from all over the American landscape and history. This is a stirring listen, with so many subjects, styles and points of view within these songs - just like the country it is about. Former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, who contributed to the set's liner notes, is the vision and executive producer, and erstwhile *Tape Op* contributor Ed Pettersen co-produces along with David Macias and Bob Olhsson (issue #30), who also handles a bulk of the recordings here and mastered the beast. (Freaky fact: Ed found out about Bob through our *Tape Op* article on him!) There are so many other studios and recording personnel utilized here that we'd fill the mag listing them all, but overall there's a fine continuity and perfect feel to this album. Proceeds will benefit The Center for American Music and The North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance, among others, so you know if you buy this you'll not only get three CDs of great music but will also be supporting some good causes. (www.songofamerica.org) -LC

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