

**Marilyn Manson**  
**Holy Wood (In The Valley Of The Shadow Of Death)**  
**(Interscope)**  
**Rating: 6 out of 7**  
**By Ken Micallef**

It is rumored that when touring, Marilyn Manson refuses to use the venue's toilet facilities, preferring instead to relieve himself in a rider-contracted 50-pound tub of cat litter. Not surprising for a man who loves wallowing in his and other people's waste. With his appetite for the paranoid and putrid, Manson has become a master of sick societal observation and shock-rock commentary.

It is impossible to consider the music of Manson without noting his lyrics. Ponder such utterances as "Do you love your guns, God, the government?" ("The Love Song"). Or, "We have no future/Heaven wasn't made for me/Burn ourselves to hell/As fast as it can be" ("In The Shadow Of The Valley Of Death"). Or, "This is evolution, the monkey, the man, then the gun" ("Cruci-fiction In Space").

Love him or hate him, you have to give it up for Marilyn Manson. Beneath his metal-glam music and disgusting public persona, Manson is a voice in the desert, confronting religious hypocrisy, greed, empty politics, loneliness, and alienation in a way that no one else can touch. Already banned in two U.S. retail chains for the cover art of *Holy Wood*, the album itself is more foreboding and accusatory than any cover art.

*Holy Wood* theorizes the death of Christ, the death of John Lennon, the American love of guns and sex and money in a kind of metal soap opera that has its seeds in the super-glam rumble of '98's *Mechanical Animals*. But Manson's grooves have slowed, and his melodies have broadened. "In The Valley Of The Shadow..." is moody and magnificent, a grand tribute to the power of fatalism. "The Nobodies" should be the first single, a prowling pop gem exclaiming: "The nobodies want to be somebodies." "Lamb Of God," "Coma Black," the raging "Burning Flag"...the songs soon grow bleaker and more malevolent, culminating in "Count To Six And Die," wherein a young girl is overtaken by—what else?—the Grim Reaper.

The album closes with the sound of a spinning gun barrel, then shots peeling off into thin air. Distorted, ingenious, black-hearted, and brutally frank, *Holy Wood* is a cartoon for cardiac arrest.

*All recordings courtesy of Nothing/Interscope. "Disposable Teens" and "Burning Flag" written by J. Lowery, B. Warner, J. White; courtesy of Blood Heavy Music/EMI Blackwood Music, Inc./Songs of Golgotha (BMI). "The Death Song" written by J. Lowery, B. Warner; courtesy of EMI Blackwood Music, Inc./Songs of Golgotha (BMI).*

**Blink-182****The Mark, Tom, And Travis Show (The Enema Strikes Back)  
(MCA)****Rating: 3 out of 7****By Bob Gulla**

It's show time once again for Blink-182, the potty-mouth punks from San Diego. This time the scatological deviants (is that redundant?) take to the stage in San Francisco over two nights and squeeze out a bevy of wacky tuneage—spliced, of course, with the requisite frat-boy fart jokes and excessive pot-buzz giggling.

The music isn't anything that Green Day et al haven't already tackled, though they do trot out the hits (or "classics," as it's stated in the press release), pleasing the screaming teen throngs to no end. Though its candor might elicit an eyebrow-raising grin, the trio's humor isn't really all that funny. Yet despite these drawbacks, along with a Less-Than-Jake live mix, the album doesn't fall flat. The mixture of decent hooks, ebullient performances, and utter tomfoolery actually makes you wish that, yeah, maybe seeing Blink-182 at one of these gigs wouldn't have been such a bad night out.

*All recordings courtesy of MCA Records. All songs written by T. DeLonge, M. Hoppus; courtesy of EMI April Music, Inc./Fun With Goats (ASCAP).*

**Everclear****Songs From An American Movie, Vol. 2: Good Time For A Bad Attitude (Capitol)****Rating: 4 out of 7****By Bob Gulla**

It's easy to confuse loud with attitude, or loud with energy, or loud with angry. Just because a song's got overdriven guitars and ride cymbals that'd drive a collie out of his mind doesn't mean it's got emotional punch. It's like the Texan who speaks louder when a foreigner can't understand him. It just ain't gonna happen. On his follow-up to the pleasantly sophisticated Beatle homage, *Songs From An American Movie, Vol. 1*, Everclear's Art Alexakis makes this mistake early and often. Sadly, his transgressions hurt the overall quality of this allegedly aggressive disc, the second in a two-volume set.

Don't be mistaken: There are some powerful moments here, especially the punk-rock-inspired "All F—ked Up," the guitar-fortified radio song "When It All Goes Wrong Again," and the blues-infused "Misery Whip," which sounds like a cross between Zeppelin and Muddy

Waters. In the end, though, too much bluster prevents Alexakis and company from hitting the nerve center of truly emotional music, begging the question: Why didn't the band just combine the best of *Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*?

*All recordings courtesy of Capitol Records. All songs written by A. Alexakis and Everclear; courtesy of Irving Music, Inc./Evergleam Music/Montalupis Music/Commongreen Music (BMI).*

**Linkin Park**  
**Hybrid Theory (Warner Brothers)**  
**Rating: 6 out of 7**  
**By Janiss Garza**

The longevity of heavy rock is due to its ability to develop and evolve constantly; what worked for AC/DC and Judas Priest in the late '70s, or Metallica and Anthrax 10 years later, is not going to cut it today. At the moment, hard music is nearing the end of a phase that began somewhere around Korn—harsh, extreme and edgier than ever before. Along the way, various bands have added elements of hip-hop and electronic noise. Linkin Park is a solid, meaty outfit, and if it doesn't quite have the distinction of some of its predecessors, that's only because it's so hard at this late date to bring something new to the mix. Keeping this handicap in mind, the group's debut disc has quite a bit to offer.

One thing *Hybrid Theory* has in abundance—besides volume—is catchy hooks, as evidenced by "With You" and the single "One Step Closer." And having two vocalists—Chester Bennington and MC Mike Shinoda—enables the Southern California sextet to offer singing, screeching, and/or rapping without a compromise in any area. This disc is loud to be sure, but the group also understands dynamics; "In The Head" lays back with attitude and "Cure For The Itch" is intriguingly atmospheric. If at times there's a bit too much anxiety-ridden navel-gazing (as in "By Myself," for example), that's about par for the course these days. Overall, *Hybrid Theory* is a skillfully done album that deserves the brisk sales it got coming out of the box. It'll do until heavy music reinvents itself yet again.

*All recordings courtesy of Warner Bros. "One Step Closer" and "Points Of Authority" written by Linkin Park courtesy of Zomba Music/Chesterchaz Publishing/Big Bad Mr. Hahn Music/Nondisclosure Agreement Music/Rob Bourdon Music/Kenji Kobayashi Music (BMI). "With You" written by Linkin Park, & The Dust Brothers; courtesy of*

Zomba Music/Chesterchaz Publishing/Big Bad Mr. Hahn Music/Nondisclosure Agreement Music/Rob Bourdon Music/Kenji Kobayashi Music (BMI)/M. Simpson/J. King.

**Add N To (X)**  
**Add Insult To Injury (Mute)**  
**Rating: 4 out of 7**  
**By Ken Micallef**

Like the Ventures fueled on steroids and old Kraftwerk and Gary Numan records, Add N To (X) rampages through Farfisa-freaked anthems full of distorted, block-rocking beats and Vocoder-treated vocals. Riding waves of circular drums and growling synths, Add N To (X) can't seem to get up and get on with it on *Add Insult To Injury*, with some songs slowly spinning in place like a sleeping top.

Tick-tocking toy beats infuse the robotic "B.P. Perino" and garbled washing machines and roly-poly bass and drums mire the Muzak of "Incinerator No. 1," while the Devo-inspired "Adding N to (X)" is the band's treatise to man-machine monotony. Critically hailed for earlier albums such as *Avant Hard* and *On The Wires Of Our Nerves*, Add N To (X)'s latest simply recalls a soundtrack to some cheesy 1950s horror movie in which somebody forgot the monsters.

*All recordings courtesy of Mute Records. "Brothel Charge" and "Kingdom Of Shades (Exorcist)" written by Claydon, Shenton, Allum; courtesy of Universal PolyGram International Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP)/Copyright Control. "Plug Me In" written by Smith, Honer; courtesy of Universal PolyGram International Publishing, Inc./Chrysalis Music (ASCAP).*

**R. Kelly**  
**TP-2.com (Jive)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Billy Johnson Jr.**

R. Kelly's fifth album, *TP-2.com*, is in some senses, a sequel to his 1993 solo debut *12 Play*. That album's sexual romps "Bump N' Grind," "Your Body's Callin' Me," and "Freak Dat Body" are reincarnated, conceptually, at least, on the "The Greatest Sex," "Like A Real Freak," "Feel On Yo Booty," and a number of equally racy tracks.

But what's most interesting about Mr. Kelly's return is that many of his new songs exude a bit more remorse about relationships gone bad than he's dealt with in the past ("When A Woman's Fed Up" from *R.*, his last album, was a loner until now). Hear him apologize on "I Don't Mean It," have a change of heart on "I Decided," and work to keep the relationship together on "All I Really Want." He even closes the album

with the country-influenced “The Storm Is Over Now.” The album’s consistent warm vibe finds the Chicago native singing over the soft, syrupy R&B that initially won him fans, music beds that revisit smooth ‘70s stylings and some pretty cool hip-hop Latin rhythms that aren’t over the top.

Though R. Kelly’s bad-boy demeanor has probably limited his fanbase, his musicianship speaks for itself.

*R. Kelly: All recordings courtesy of Jive Records. All songs written by R. Kelly; courtesy of Zomba Songs, Inc./R. Kelly Publishing, Inc. administered by Zomba Songs, Inc. (BMI).*

**OutKast**  
**Stankonia (Arista)**  
**Rating: 7 out of 7**  
**By Soren Baker**

People who complain that all hip-hop sounds the same have never listened to OutKast. On its fourth album, the Atlanta-based duo delivers another knockout of an album, one as diverse as Dennis Rodman’s hairstyles. Dre and Big Boi again reinvent themselves, this time as Parliament-inspired musicians who specialize in male-female relationships, boasting, and out-there lyrics.

Easily the more experimental of the two, Dre distorts his voice, sings in falsetto, and raps in cosmic-coded lyrics on many of the 17 songs, including the irresistible single “Ms. Jackson.” In fact, much of the album remains upbeat, straying from the introspective tone and political slant of much of OutKast’s earlier work. But this is one party worth experiencing. “BOB” explodes in revved-up adrenaline, while “So Fresh So Clean” is smoother than freshly lotioned skin.

With another nearly flawless album, OutKast arguably solidifies its reputation as one of the best hip-hop groups of all time.

*All recordings courtesy of LaFace/Arista Records. “B.O.B” and “Ms. Jackson” written by A. Benjamin, A. Patton, D. Sheats; courtesy of Gnat Booty/Chrysalis Music, Inc./Dungeon Ratz Music, Inc. (ASCAP). “So Fresh, So Clean” written by Organized Noize, A. Benjamin, A. Patton; courtesy of Organized Noize Music (BMI)/Gnat Booty/Chrysalis Music, Inc. (ASCAP).*

**Chante Moore**  
**Exposed (MCA)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Ebony Macon Johnson**

Whether Chante Moore has changed or simply revealed another side of her personality (as she proclaims), the unmistakably new sound of her fourth album, *Exposed*, will surely raise the eyebrows of existing fans. With the help of notable producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, Tim and Bob, Jermaine Dupri, Lenny Stewart, and Katrina Willis, the album makes a valiant attempt to reach a younger audience.

Now, Moore is unlikely to tap into the wallets of the flourishing teen market, but the uptempo dance tracks, such as "Take Care Of Me" featuring Da Brat and her first single, "Straight Up," are welcomed additions. However, her niche is still her breathtaking love ballads, which R&B fans have loved since her debut album, *Precious*. "I'm Keeping You," which describes a wife's desperate plot to win her cheatin' husband back from his mistress, and "Better Than Making Love" will not disappoint.

Moore, who co-wrote six tracks, once wrote about having a man. Now, she writes that she is bitter. Don't expect many of her releases to go multiplatinum, but her heartfelt lyrics describing the relationship process from the chase to the end are worth a listen. The 25-and-over crowd will be overcome with a feeling of nostalgia hearing Moore's best project. The lyrics, coupled with enhanced production, make *Exposed* well worth adding to your collection.

*All recordings courtesy of MCA Records. "Straight Up" written by J. Dupri, B.M Cox, C. Loving; courtesy of Mo Loving Music/EMI April Music Inc./So So Def Music (ASCAP)/Babyboy's Little Publishing Company/Noontime South (SESAC). "Take Care Of Me" written by C. Moore, T. Kelley, B. Robinson; courtesy of Lil' Bit Mo' Publishing (ASCAP)/Time For Flytes Music, Inc./Songs Of DreamWorks, administered by Cherry River Music Co. (BMI). "Man" written by C. Moore, D. Scantz, B-M Cox, K. Hicks; courtesy of Lil' Bit Mo' Publishing (ASCAP)/Babyboy's Little Publishing Company/Scantz Music/Noontime South (SESAC)/Kevin Hicks Music/Noontime Tunes (BMI).*

**Sparkle**  
**Told You So (Motown)**  
**Rating: 4 out of 7**  
**By Billy Johnson Jr.**

Sparkle first made an impression on the R&B scene in 1998 with "Be Careful," a male-versus-female duet with R. Kelly, who also wrote and produced the entire album. Sparkle's soft, almost frail vocals offered the perfect counterpart. But two years later, the singer teams with a new producer, Steve "Stone" Huff, who happens to mimic R. Kelly's production style on much of the album. If you didn't check the credits, you'd think that "It's A Fact," the album's first single and a new female

anthem, was produced by Kelly because of the pattern of the flickering guitars plus Sparkle's conversational singing style and old-school edge.

Though "It's A Fact" is a strong enough first release, the other R. Kelly bites "When A Woman's Heart Is Broken," "All I Want," and "Everything" lack any real punch. And when Sparkle ventures out to do a more original thing, she only really makes a notable impact on the syncopated, don't-mess-with-me album intro "Don't Know Why" and heavily hip-hop-influenced "Good Life," with braggadocio-filled lyrics and all. Though her voice is pleasant and sweet enough, the overall package is just OK.

*All recordings courtesy of Motown Records. "It's A Fact" written by S. Huff, Sparkle; courtesy of Tuff Huff Music/Zomba Music, Diva This, Diva That (BMI). "When A Woman's Heart Is Broken" written by Joe, Q. Patrick, D. Conley, J. Thompson; courtesy of 563 Music Publishing (Zomba Enterprises, Inc.)/Tallest Tree Music/David "Pic" Cowley Melodic Noiz Music/Plaything Music (ASCAP)/Q ZIK Music/Music Pieces (BMI). "Never Can Say Goodbye" written by C. Davis, S. Huff, C. Kelly, C. Davis; courtesy of Tuff Huff Music/Zomba Music, Christian House Publishing (BMI)/Jobete Music Company, Inc./EMI Music Publishing (ASCAP).*

**Talib Kweli & Hi-Tek**  
**Reflection Eternal (Rawkus)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Dan LeRoy**

Less than two minutes into this disc, Talib Kweli makes the battle lines between his philosophy and hip-hop's prevailing trends clear. "We don't represent the streets," raps the articulate Brooklynite, "we represent the people in 'em." And in case you didn't get it, De La Soul shows up later on the funky "Soul Rebels" to drive the point home: "We don't live for hip-hop/it lives for us." Those aren't idle boasts. How many MCs these days would use the metaphor of leading kids on a nature hike?

But you can't accuse Kweli and Cincinnati beatmaster Hi-Tek of coming soft. Just check out "Ghetto Afterlife," in which a hard, piano-based track and old-school tough guy Kool G Rap help the duo challenge the East Coast hardcore on their own turf. Or note how Rah Digga and Xzibit pump up the already tough "Down For The Count." Still, Kweli and Tek are best when the beats are soaked with soul and jazz, and the discussions are more philosophical. And there's plenty that fits that description here, from the hypnotically tribal double dip "Memories Live" and "Africa Dream" (which calls today's designer rappers "slaves on a ship/talkin' bout who got the flyer chain") to the stunning reunion with Kweli's Black Star partner Mos Def on "This

Means You." Almost the equal of Mos Def's *Black On Both Sides*, this is a superb outing and one of the year's best—hip-hop or otherwise.

*All recordings courtesy of Rawkus Records. "Move Somethin'" and "Good Mourning" written by T. K. Greene, T. Cottrell; courtesy of Penskills Music/DJ Hi-Tek Music (BMI). "Down For The Count" written by T.K. Greene, R. Fisher, A. Joiner, T. Cottrell; courtesy of Penskills Music/Henessey For Everyone/DJ Hi-Tek Music (BMI)/Rah Digga Music (ASCAP).*

**Spice Girls**  
**Forever (Virgin)**  
**Rating: 3 out of 7**  
**By Bob Gulla**

The best thing about the Spice Girls circa 2000 is that they aren't in their teens. I'd never thought I'd hear myself say this—but, given the recent glut of randy teen pop, it's a relief to hear radio-friendly dance music that's, well, "grown up." *Forever*, the girls' third album and first without Ginger Spice, is a relatively low-key effort, heavy on melody with enough substantial performances to elevate it above the trite teen tune tundra currently dominating the airwaves.

*Forever* bows promisingly with its two best tracks, the Babyface-inspired opener "Holler" and the zesty follow-up "Tell Me Why." The quality dips when the Girls take the tempo down. Ballads like "Let Love Lead The Way" and the insufferable "Time Goes By" kill the brassy buzz, before two closing numbers, the good-time "Oxygen" and the poignant "Goodbye," finish up strong.

The Girls still don't know how to sing together like a good vocal group should, but they're approaching a point in where the quality and maturity of their material is beginning to tell a more interesting story.

*All recordings courtesy of Virgin Records. "Holler" and "Weekend Love" written by V. Beckham, M. Brown, E. Bunton, M. Chisholm, R. Jerkins, L. Daniels, F. Jerkins III; courtesy of EMI Full Keel Music/EMI April Music, Inc./LaShawn Daniels Productions, Inc. (ASCAP)/EMI Blackwood Music, Inc./Rodney Jerkins Productions, Inc./Ensign Music Corp./Fred Jerkins Publishing (BMI). "Let Love Lead The Way" written by V. Beckham, M. Brown, E. Bunton, M. Chisholm, R. Jerkins, L. Daniels, F. Jerkins III/H. Mason, Jr.; courtesy of EMI Full Keel Music/EMI April Music, Inc./LaShawn Daniels Productions, Inc. (ASCAP)/EMI Blackwood Music, Inc./Rodney Jerkins Productions, Inc./Ensign Music Corp./Fred Jerkins Publishing (BMI)/First Avenue Music LTD (PRS).*

**Hootie & the Blowfish**  
**Scattered, Smothered And Covered (Atlantic)**  
**Rating: 6 out of 7**



## **By Bob Gulla**

All Hootie & the Blowfish ever wanted to do was be your friend. Instead you derided them, made them the butt of many jokes. No matter, in the end, it's the band that wins out. They've amassed a legion of devotees, many of whom had a hand in compiling *Scattered, Smothered And Covered*, the band's fourth Atlantic release and first odds and sods collection.

The album is the result of an online campaign asking fans to participate in shaping the disc's song list. As a result, the album's a casual pleasure—better, in fact, than any of their studio efforts. It's raw and lean, with a stripped-down, organic rock sound reminiscent of Hootie heroes like Radney Foster, R.E.M., the Who, and Tom Petty. There are covers of Vic Chesnutt's "Gravity Of The Situation" (with Nanci Griffith on vocals), the Silos' fine "I'm Over You," and Tom Waits' "I Hope That I Don't Fall In Love With You," all done in the band's inimitably warm style, led by Darius Rucker's cozy blanket of a voice. A surprise, and a real pleasure.

*All recordings courtesy of Atlantic Records. "I Go Blind" written by N. Osbourne; courtesy of Sony/ATV Tunes LLC/Sony Music Publishing Canada/Fifty Four Forty Music (ASCAP). "Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want" written by J. Marr, S. Morrissey; courtesy of Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. (BMI). "Almost Home" written by J. Croslin; courtesy of Mid-Snicker Music c/o Bug Music, Inc. (BMI).*

## **Stars**

### **Nightsongs (Le Grand Magistry)**

**Rating: 5 out of 7**

**By Ken Micallef**

The debut from this international quartet just might be the antidote to our presidential dilemma, the Mideast crisis—and just about any other stress-inducing situation you can think of. Mixing the breezy, British pop of bands like Everything But The Girl with the sonic mindset of Saint Etienne, principal members Torquil Campbell and Chris Seligman have fashioned something of a dark, romantic concept record.

Beginning with the percolating, electronic groove of "Counting Stars On The Ceiling," the tunes are framed by lilting melody lines and creative drum tracks with various muted keyboards, violin and trumpet lines (and very few guitars) filling in the middle. The easy, hop-hop pulse of "My Radio" places Campbell's half-sung, free association over soaring synth lines and those increasingly popular Burt Bacharach trumpet fills. Stars' inventive take on the Smiths' "This Charming Man"

does more than just pay homage to its favorite band (and favorite song of its favorite band).

Over a drum loop that both straightens out and relaxes the song's original pace, Campbell whispers the verses, updating it and turning it into a track that fits in seamlessly with the other tracks. Just as impressive, subsequent tunes like the gentle "On Peak Hill," the wry, artistic commentary "Write What You Know," the pleading piano/vocal duet "Tonight" and "Liar," the dark tale of two psychos (dedicated to British singer/songwriter Momus) weave their own tale, create their own mood—but stay well within the identity of the band. The disc closes with a pair of bonus tracks, "Toxic Holiday" and an alternate mix of "My Radio."

*All recordings courtesy of Le Grand Magistery. All songs written by Stars; courtesy of Bock The Lay Music (ASCAP).*

**Goldfrapp**  
**Felt Mountain (Mute)**  
**Rating: 6 out of 7**  
**By Ken Micallef**

Like the fictional Heidi kidnapped by Dr. Frankenstein, Alison Goldfrapp looks and sounds like a lovely child, but one who has gone bonkers while deserted in some haunted Swiss castle. Singing of disconnected body parts in the surreal "Lovely Head," spinning the Shirley Bassey moment in "Human," or crying into her bag of blood and Beth Gibbons' bones in the exotically demure "Paper Bag," Alison Goldfrapp concocts a singular experience on *Felt Mountain*.

Once providing the disembodied voice to the music of Tricky and Orbital, Goldfrapp is now fixated on body parts, eerie moods, and broken hearts. Taking cues from John Barry, Portishead, and Ennio Morricone, Goldfrapp and collaborator Will Gregory make elegiac music as elegant as "Diamonds Are Forever" and as haunting as Bobbie Gentry's "Ode To Billie Joe." *Felt Mountain's* orchestra of theramin, harpsichords, electric piano, sitars, strings, and brass is spookily impressive, but it's Goldfrapp's exotic voice that chills, recalling the hostess at the Spanish Inquisition one moment, Mae West on a sex bender the next. She oozes both lust and loneliness, an odd woman searching for love among the ruins.

The dreamlike "Pilots" frames her sensual phrasing and operatic high notes, while "Deer Stop" is as mournful as midnight in Transylvania. There is kitsch of the highest order here too ("Oompa Radar"), but *Felt Mountain's* dark night of the soul is mostly bleak, beautiful, and

deliciously bizarre. Bring up the lights: Alison Goldfrapp is ready for her close-up.

*All recordings courtesy of Mute Records. All songs written by A. Goldfrapp, W. Gregory; courtesy of Copyright Control.*

**St. Germain**  
**Tourist (Blue Note)**  
**rating: 6 out of 7**  
**By Chris Morris**

The blending of old-school acoustic jazz and contemporary mixology is potentially so fruitful that it's surprising such cross-genre projects as St. Germain haven't proliferated. This French unit—a jazz sextet conducted by cut-and-paste maestro Ludovic Navarre—probes the terrain attractively. Even when the group is basically just laying its cooled-out style over nouveau beats, everything clicks swimmingly; trumpeter Pascal Ohse and pianist Alexandre Destrez in particular show off strong solo chops.

But when Navarre tosses some sharp samples into the blender—as on “Rose Rouge,” which utilizes a sly Marlena Shaw clip, or “Sure Thing,” which rides vocals and guitars by John Lee Hooker lifted from the soundtrack of *The Hot Spot*—things get special. Finally, “Montego Bay Spleen,” with Jamaican guitar ace Ernest Ranglin sitting in, may be the crowning glory of this sublimely entertaining and swingingly up-to-date album.

*All recordings courtesy of Blue Note Records. All songs written by L. Navarre; courtesy of Primary Society Publishing (SACEM).*

**Robby Krieger**  
**Cinematix (R&D/Oglio Records)**  
**Rating: 4 out of 7**  
**By Bob Gulla**

Former—and somehow still current—Doors guitarist Robby Krieger, the guy who wrote “Light My Fire” and “Love Me Two Times,” isn't the kind of solo artist you'd expect him to be. So it takes a while to readjust your expectations once his new album, *Cinematix*, starts spinning in your player. Beyond the gothic-inspired psychedelic rock he made with Morrison and company, Krieger proves to be an able and versatile guitarist, as demonstrated on the opening, near-shred “Snake

Oil," the bluesy "Idolatry," the jazz-fusion wig-out "Missionary Jam," and the Jeff Beck-inspired hard-rocker "Red Alert." There's even a hip remix of the Doors' "Peace Frog," called "War Toad (Peace Frog Remix)."

Yet, while some of Krieger's wide stylistic swings challenge credibility, much of his exploration is impressive and worthwhile. Of course, having drummer Billy Cobham, guitar hero Edgar Winter, and Zappa bassist Arthur Barrow joining him doesn't hurt. Chances are slim he'll recapture his former songwriting glory, but at least he sounds like he's having fun making some good music and playing some good guitar.

*All recordings courtesy of R&D/Oglio Records. "Idolatry" written by R. Krieger, A. Barrow; courtesy of Nazzenphlat Music/Cydonian Music (ASCAP). "Missionary Jam" R. Krieger, J. Avila, J. Hernanadez; Nazzenphlat Music/Anferla Music/Angel Man Music (ASCAP). "War Toad" written by J. Morrison, R. Krieger; courtesy of Doors Music (ASCAP).*

**John Surman**  
**Coruscating (ECM)**  
**Rating: 6 out of 7**  
**By Ken Micallef**

From the Trio (with Barre Phillips and Stu Martin) to the Paul Bley Quartet to the jazz/Arab music synthesis of the Thimar trio, baritone saxophonist John Surman has been a restless soul, making his mark independent of styles and trends. Surman's previous ECM recordings have been far ranging as well, from the free improv of the Stranger Than Fiction quartet to duets with drummer Jack DeJohnette to the brass fantasies of "The Brass Project." *Coruscating* is the next step in Surman's evolution as a composer, and it is a far cry from what most American jazzers attempt at a similar stage in their careers. But then, this is Euro jazz, and the rules are as different as Michael Brecker is from John Zorn.

Already compared to the work of Vaughan Williams, Bridge, and Benjamin Britten in the *London Times*, *Coruscating* is an orchestral work with a small chamber group featuring string players from the orchestra of St. Martin In The Fields. This is not classical music, but an unusual, successful attempt to bridge expressive saxophone and upright bass solos with the broad palette of a string quartet. With Chris Laurence on bass, *Coruscating* swings in the solos, but with the added tension and color of a string quartet.

From the moody Harry Carney salute "Stone Flower" to the forlorn "Moonless Midnight" to the blowout quartet work in "Winding Passages," *Coruscating* requires serious listening to be fully effective. Some might hear it as difficult, closer to contemporary classical than

any jazz/classical fusion, but when the soloists are at full tilt, the music swings and the stuffy hubris of a zillion notes devoted to long-dead classical masters is erased.

*All recordings courtesy of ECM Records. All songs written by J. Surman, courtesy of Manuscript/PRS.*

**Gilgamesh**  
**Arriving Twice (Cuneiform)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Dave DiMartino**

Among the handful of interesting British fusion groups to surface in the mid-'70s, Gilgamesh played a music halfway between the jazzier antics of like-minded Brits Soft Machine and the more ordered, less freeform Hatfield & the North. Which also meant they were of interest—but not vastly so—to fans of both groups. Centered around late pianist Alan Gowen (who in the course of making two excellent albums with Gilgamesh would go on to co-found the more interesting National Health), the group disbanded in 1978 and hasn't been heard from since. Indie label Cuneiform's surprise issue of these previously unheard recordings—three separate sessions done between 1973-75—is welcome indeed, and a rewarding listen for the curious.

With a superb cast of players including guitarist Phil Lee and drummer Mike Travis, among others, the lengthy set captures all that was both good and bad about the combo: While both the playing and arrangements were top-notch, the band's major limitation seemed to be the compositional skills of pianist Gowen. Since he lacked the melodic sophistication of Soft Machine's Mike Ratledge and the conspicuous classical background of Hatfield's superb Dave Stewart, the tunes simply never embedded themselves that deeply into the consciousness of the literate jazzbo types who like this sort of stuff in the first place. Though not entirely unique, Gilgamesh was better than most of its '70s contemporaries, and worth discovering once again.

*All recordings courtesy of Cuneiform Records and MCPS (PRS). "With Lady And Friend" written by A. Gowen, J. Clyne; "Island Of Rhodes" and "Notwithstanding" written by A. Gowen, S. Cook, P. Lee.*

**Sonny Rollins**  
**This Is What I Do (Milestone)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**

## **By Ken Micallef**

Like the album's workingman title implies, this is tenor sax great Sonny Rollins clocking in, jamming a bit, blowing a few solos, and letting the younger guys take the helm. Not that the contributions of drummers Jack DeJohnette and Perry Wilson, bassist Bob Cranshaw, and pianist Stephen Scott don't cut the mustard, but the entire proceedings are rather lacklustre, like Rollins is just meeting contractual obligations. There is no smoke, no fire, no burn.

Rollins adheres to his love of calypso with the opener, "Salvador," and unleashes a little reggae simmer on "Did You See Harold Vick?" Then it's on to slow blues with "Sweet Leilani" and "Charles M," a ballad standard, "A Nightingale Sang In Berkeley Square," and the sprightly swinger "The Moon Of Manakoora."

Rollins is still unquestionably a masterful player and musician, his solos still sure-footed, surprising, and sumptuous. But with pale song fare that would easily be accepted at a wedding reception, the band and Rollins are wasted in the mix.

*All recordings courtesy of Milestone Records. All songs written by S. Rollins; courtesy of Son Rol Music (BMI).*

## **Fatboy Slim**

### **Halfway Between The Gutter And The Stars (Astralwerks)**

**Rating: 5 out of 7**

**By Rob O' Connor**

How do you go from being a replacement bass player for the Housemartins to the hottest DJ in demand? I'm certain there are plenty of former child actors trying to figure out how to make such a successful transition. Norman Cook, aka Fatboy Slim, this time hooks up with the very tall Macy Gray and the impact is obvious. DJs like to get freaky, and who better to get freaky with than someone whose voice personifies the quality?

Concept is king in what is the musical equivalent of modern art. Why else to include an obscure Doors track (from *An American Prayer*) on a sample for "Sunset (Bird of Prey)" than to get a cool dead guy on the album and show off how well you know your history? Lots of weird references here and there. The presence of Bootsy Collins is a nice hook-up as well. And hey, isn't that sun on the album cover shining out of someone's behind? This dude is a sly whippersnapper, I swear!

All recordings courtesy of Astralwerks. "Ya Mama ("Shake What Ya Mama Gave Ya"?)" written by N. Cook, F. Cutlass, C. Smith, J. Hiseman, D. Heckstall-Smith, D. Finley; courtesy of Universal Music Publishing, LTD/Thirty Three West Music/Cutlass Music/Universal Songs Of PolyGram International, Inc./Dick James Music, Inc./Coloasseum Music LTD/Cotillion Music, Inc./Fede Yon Music, administered by Warner-Tamerlane Publishing Corp. (BMI)/Veinte Tres Music/Cold Rock Publishing (ASCAP). "Mad Flava" written by N. Cook; courtesy of Universal PolyGram International Publishing, Inc. (ASCAP). "Sunset (Bird Of Prey)" written by N. Cook, J. Morrison, J. Densmore, R. Manzarek, R. Krieger; courtesy of Universal PolyGram International Publishing, Inc./Doors Music Co. (ASCAP)/James Douglas Morrison Music.

**Roni Size/ Reprazent  
In The Mode (Talkin Loud/Island)  
Rating: 5 out of 7  
By Ken Micallef**

With his Reprazent posse of DJ Krust, Die, Suv, MC Dynamite, and vocalist Onalee, Roni Size married bombastic drum-n-bass, jaz, and the Caribbean-influenced soul of Bristol on his debut, *New Forms*. Jungle jazz was all the rage then, and Size was its messiah. He brought together pop sensibilities and underground jazz, blaring hip-hop drum loops and surreal vocals, futuristic sounds, and feel-good songs. *New Forms* was the ultimate end-of-the-century soundtrack.

But *In The Mode* forgoes innovation for questionable hip-hop credibility. The beats are still drum-n-bass—of a style, but the edges are harder, the raps are ominous and omnipresent, and *New Forms*' subtle jazz influence is gone.

Where many see the stand-off between drum-n-bass's various hardstep camps as a dead end, Size has actually made his music harder, darker, and uglier than ever before. Rahzel, Method Man, and Zack De La Rocha add their skills to the proceedings, but the real star is still the sound—a bruising amalgam of robo-bombastic beats, swooping hairpin siren calls and sequencers, and bass modules replicating the end of the world. Rahzel's "In Tune With" is a revelation, though—Size cutting up the human beatbox into various samples to create a funky track from the ingredients.

But much of the album—the annoying "Who Told You," the queasy "Mexican," the all-too-brief "System Check," is either drum and bass in stasis or a calculated attempt at street cred that falls flat. In performance, Reprazent resembles the cast of *Star Trek* as each musician works a computer monitor and the music rumbles like an interstellar asteroid spinning out to space. *In The Mode*: soundtrack to nowhere.

All recordings courtesy of Island/Talkin Loud. "Who Told You" written by Size, Kausman, Smith; courtesy of Universal-MCA Music Publishing, a division of Universal

*Studios, Inc. (ASCAP)/Full Cycle Music/Bucks Music. "Lucky Pressure" written by Size, Southey, Bowen; courtesy of Universal-MCA Music Publishing, a division of Universal Studios, Inc. (ASCAP)/Copyright Control/EMI Music Publishing. "Snapshots" written by Size, Smith, Bowen; courtesy of Universal-MCA Music Publishing, a division of Universal Studios Inc. (ASCAP)/EMI Music Publishing.*

**J Mascis & the Fog**  
**More Light (Ultimatum)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Rob O' Connor**

After several albums on Warner Bros. that can be politely described as complete freakin' disasters, former Dinosaur Jr. frontman (man, is he never going to escape that tag) J Mascis has rejoined the land of the living with a new album that doesn't sound like he drank the bongwater. Instead, he lined up Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine (the band that has most tortured its fans by taking longer than Bruce Springsteen to record a follow-up album) to help resuscitate what was a comatose career, and bingo! Damned if this isn't the toe-tapping-est release of J's since...uh, *You're Living All Over Me*, which came out when I was too young to drive.

Eleven songs are always too many coming from a horrible singer like J, but the shifting textures of "Waistin'" alone ensure that it ain't all just monolithic sludge riffs. Instead, Mascis is on his way to becoming a contributing member of society—something that must make the slacker in him shudder.

*All recording courtesy Ultimatum Music. All songs written J. Mascis; Orange Marmalade, Lettuce and Cream Cheese Music (BMI).*

**Pizzicato Five**  
**The Fifth Album From Matador (Matador)**  
**Rating: 4 out of 7**  
**By Ken Micallef**

Japanese impresario Yasuharu Konishi is the brains behind Pizzicato Five and its stylistic roller coaster that runs from contemporary Tokyo to 1960s Rome and back. *The Fifth Album From Matador* is pure kitsch, incorporating cheesy lounge fare with Ventures-styled punk, baroque string snippets, Cornelius-worthy rock send-ups, fake mambos. and the bubblegum Japanese vocals of model-turned-singer Maki Nomiya.

That P5 cares nothing about the U.S. market is clear not only from the throwaway album title, but in the Japanese-centric nature of the album. Not that they must address U.S. pop audiences, but *Fifth*



*Album...* is entirely American in style and scope, a nostalgic *Shindig* party that blasts out of the stereo with such saccharine silliness and adrenalized fever that you either want to dance or run and hide.

"Perfect World" is a go-go-boot-wearing, Nancy Sinatra-on-speed track; "Room Service" a sappy Latin jazz ripoff; and "20th Century Girl" an experiment in watusi dance fever. At album's end, P5 mumbles some indecipherable English as a kind of last laugh, but the joke is really on Yasuharu Konishi and his fixation with the cartoon side of life.

*All recordings courtesy of Matador Records. All songs written by Y. Konishi; courtesy of Columbia Music Publishing, Inc. (JASRA)/Doorman Music (BMI), administered by Bug.*

**Thee Michelle Gun Elephant**  
**Gear Blues (Alive/Total Energy)**  
**Rating: 7 out of 7**  
**By Chris Morris**

The Japanese quartet Thee Michelle Gun Elephant has been a personal crusade of mine since I first heard this hard-rocking 1998 album, then still an import, in an Atlanta record store last year. This band simply has it all—a too-tuff sound derived from instrumental power trios ranging from the Pirates and the Who to Dr. Feelgood and the Jam; a bold, hard-riffing song sense; and top-notch production values. And, in Futoshi Abe, the group boasts one of the most imaginative and powerful lead guitarists in contemporary rock. The language barrier presents no problem: Though most of the lyrics are in Japanese, Westerners can always yell along with the songs' English hook lines.

Any way you slice it, potent tunes like "West Cabaret Drive," "Smokin' Billy," "Free Devil Jam," and "Danny Go" deliver pure rock pleasure that cuts across all cultures. These rising sun rebels are not to be missed, and this collection's a stone classic.

*All recordings courtesy Alive/Total Energy. All songs written by Y. Chiba and Thee Michelle Gun Elephant; courtesy of YWA Music (BMI).*

**Vitamin C**  
**More (Elektra)**  
**Rating: 4 out of 7**  
**By Wendy Hermanson**

It's useless to debate the merits of bubblegum-styled teeny-dance pop, since it's clearly here to stay—at least for a while. When everyone from the reasonably age-appropriate Christina Aguilera to more, um, seasoned types such as Kathie Lee Gifford are releasing upbeat, over-produced dance records, it doesn't come as a surprise that a former indie-rock chick in her early 30s might decide to go the same route.

Singer/actress Vitamin C (*nee* Colleen Fitzpatrick), a veteran of the alternative rock scene (her best-known role was in the band Eve's Plum), decided to go mainstream in 1999 and scored a couple of pleasant, summer-oriented hits—"Graduation (Friends Forever)" was a particular shoo-in for the high school crowd circa June. Her sophomore effort, *More*, lives up to the title by being, well, more of the same. Glossy, electronic, and at times quite infectious, the record extends Vitamin C's bubbly reign.

Fitzpatrick nails the dance-pop sound well on her spare first single, "Itch," as well as the almost maddeningly rhythmic "Busted." There's a nice take on the requisite ballad "That Was Then, This Is Now," perfect for slow dances in the gymnasium. Fitzpatrick bombs on a few tracks—most notably, a weird interpolation of Madonna's "Where's The Party," in which she moans like Gwen Stefani on some odd bender—but makes up for this with a perky cover of the Waitresses' "I Know What Boys Like." Not surprisingly, this classic girly-pop tune works brilliantly in updated form.

Overall, Vitamin C proves she's able to work the pop scene in true professional fashion. Move over, Britney, your big sis is here to stay.

*Vitamin C: All recordings courtesy of Elektra Records. "The Itch" written by C. Fitzpatrick, J. Harry, B. Steinberg; courtesy of Blanc E. Music/Warner Chappell Music (BMI)/Whorgasma/EMI/ Jerk Awake (ASCAP). "That Was Then, This Is Now" written by C. Fitzpatrick, J. Deutsch; courtesy of Blanc E. Music/Warner Chappell Music/Big Black Jacket Music/Warner Chappell Music (BMI). "She Talks About Love" written by C. Fitzpatrick, M. Kotch; courtesy Blanc E. Music/Warner Chappell Music/Fragile Bunny Music (BMI).*

**Rick Nelson**  
**Legacy (Capitol)**  
**Rating: 5 out of 7**  
**By Chris Morris**

On his 1962 hit "Teenage Idol," Rick Nelson painted a pretty dismal picture of stardom. I always thought he protested a bit too much, but on reviewing the evidence on the new four-CD, 100-track boxed set devoted to his career, it's clear that Nelson, the original teen idol, has gotten something of a raw deal from musical history. Still written off by many as a pretty boy with a passable voice who parlayed his TV fame

into a career, he emerges on *Legacy* as a gifted and at times even prophetic figure.

Nelson derived his first exposure from *Ozzie & Harriet*, the long-running network TV comedy on which he played himself, opposite his parents and brother David. In 1957, at the age of 16, Rick--then still known as "Ricky"--began making his first musical appearances on the show, and cut his debut single for Verve Records (produced by jazz guitarist Barney Kessel, no less).

Video quickly made a radio star out of young Ricky, but he had an undeniably smooth voice, and he showed a true affinity for authentic rockabilly (his idol was Carl Perkins). Additionally, he had a sympathetic producer in Imperial Records' Jimmie Haskell, and a strong right-hand man in lead guitarist James Burton, whose taut, rhythmic picking heated Nelson's biggest hits.

The first two CDs of *Legacy* focus on Nelson's hit-making era, which lasted into the early '60s. The slickly tooled smashes are all here, including "Poor Little Fool," "Lonesome Town," "Travelin' Man," "Hello Mary Lou" (perhaps Burton's finest hour), and the irresistible "It's Up To You." Some rarities are also included, like strong interpretations of tunes by the Rockabilly Trio's Johnny and Dorsey Burnette and, most incredibly, a naked rendering of the ultra-depressing Billie Holiday vehicle "Gloomy Sunday."

In 1963-64, Nelson's career began to wane as, under the apparent influence of his ex-bandleader dad, he cut backdated pop material like "Fools Rush In," "For You," and "The Very Thought Of You"--all hits, but not exactly timely in the Beatles epoch. In 1966, after a couple of years in the commercial wilderness, he reconfigured himself as a country rocker--at least two years before the Byrds and Bob Dylan took that plunge. The material from this period is some of the best on the set; the finest tracks include the self-penned "You Just Can't Quit" and "Easy To Be Free," a tough version of "Mystery Train," and "She Belongs To Me," the first of several delicate Dylan covers he would record.

Nelson's late '60s/early '70s work with the Stone Canyon Band--a top-shelf unit that included future Eagle Randy Meisner and Buck Owens's steel guitarist Tom Brumley--was designed to avoid the oldies cul-de-sac so many of the singer's contemporaries dropped into during that time. Nelson's biggest latter-day hit, 1971's "Garden Party," was in fact an attack on the intolerance of the audience at a Madison Square Garden oldies show at which Nelson performed.

Yet, ironically, as Nelson flitted from label to label near the end of his career, his strongest records were those in a neo-rockabilly vein; such early '80s performances as his covers of Buddy Holly's "Rave On," Graham Parker's "Back To Schooldays," and John Hiatt's "Doll Hospital" all reach back to the Sun Records sound that informed Nelson's early style.

After Rick Nelson died, along with his band, in a fiery plane crash on New Year's Eve in 1985, he was remembered by most as the buzz-cut, mellow-voiced kid who set teen girls' hearts aflutter in rock 'n' roll's first decade. But *Legacy* reveals he was in fact a searching and restless artist whose talents ran far deeper than most people imagined.

*All recordings courtesy of Capitol Records. "Believe What You Say" written by D. Burnette, J. Burnette; courtesy of Chrysalis Songs/Ring A Ding Music/EMI Unart Catalog, Inc./Johnny Burnette Music (BMI). "Garden Party" written by E. H. Nelson; courtesy of Matragun Music, Inc. (BMI). "Travelin' Man" written by J. Fuller; courtesy of Acuff Rose Music, Inc. (BMI).*