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REVIEWS

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REVIEW ARCHIVE



> WOLF PARADE
Issue 1000
At Mount Zoomer (Stomp/Sub Pop)

First, let's note I'm biased towards this band on the level where, after three years, this album finally leaked onto the internet and I weed myself a little. While this could imply my review is the ravings of a converted fanboy, it actually makes me its harshest critic since every note I'm going to compare with previous album *Apologies To The Queen Mary*. However, *Apologies* this is not. That debut was a raw, energetic indie rock jackpot. It had the precise amount of low-fidelity production to hit the right nerves. Songs like *I'll Believe In Anything* carried passion with a panic-bordering intensity that I've searched to find again. Given the talent involved, and the battle for artistic supremacy between leads Spencer Krug and Dan Boeckner, that's what you'd expect. On early listens of *Zoomer* I was concerned. Riff machine Boeckner was ripping hooks and crazy twangs that almost tried to camouflage their madness. Crisper now, it seemed the goal was a wholesome, warmer sound that was healthy for you rather than spiking your blood sugar. I listened more, focussing on Krug who still lays keyboards that bring the same emotions – pain yet beauty, warmth but intrigue – as two porcupines fucking. Though, they seemed blunted, like the keys he stabbed he wasn't trying to break. There was exhilaration, but less risk. On some listens I mentally isolated Arlen Thompson's drumming. It sounded tight, just too rehearsed. The wild stallion that raced through any weather in 2005 was older. It galloped, but it lacked spectacular. Wolf Parade have gone for progression and maturity and that's pulled them out of the stratosphere. *At Mount Zoomer* is still indie rock gold, but it's not stellar. I should know! I've listened to it over and over again. And, I haven't stopped yet. It might just be the best good-not-great album ever made. Brad McNaughton



> THE VERVE
Issue 1000
Forth (EMI)

One of the curious things about The Verve was that theirs was a career delicately balanced - on the one hand the everyman, laddish tendencies; on the other, the artistically inquisitive impulses. That, and the fact that Richard Ashcroft and Nick McCabe were at times about as compatible as ice cream and gravy. What set them apart was their ability to combine two incompatible elements to devastating effect. As for *Forth*, we've been here before. The eight-million selling *Urban Hymns* was issued after a break-up that was never really resolved – more so its causes bubbled away as the cash rolled in. And what is there for those expecting *Urban Hymns II*? Not a lot of the same. The self-consciousness of *The Drugs Don't Work* and the lovelorn shyness of *Sonnet* have been kicked into touch. In its place is a collection of songs whose confidence is as astounding as it is welcome. *Sit And Wonder*, which opens *Forth*, is built around a groove that shows all the poise of the band's *Northern Soul*-period before first single *Love Is Noise* - heralded by a siren obviously - arrives. In one fell swoop it tells you everything you ever needed to know about The Verve and jogs older ears. Ashcroft misquotes William Blake, McCabe exorcises his guitar of several hooks and we're all thrilled by the chemistry. Easy. *Judas* is a distant cousin of *Life's An Ocean* and *Valium Skies* is typically shimmering. It's all thrillingly laidback but unmistakably Verve. There may not be much of a new direction but they've got live if you want it. *Forth* could be a musical house of cards - Ashcroft's solo career has been a study in the law of diminishing returns and he recently admitted undergoing treatment for depression. But if you can put aside all of that, for even a moment, and buy into the bonkers-but-brilliant arrogance then *Forth* is close to the year's best. All farewells should be reconsidered. Chris Scutt

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> THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM
Issue 1000
Senor And The Queen (Resist)

This between-albums EP from punk rock'n'rollers The Gaslight Anthem has a lot to live up to after their sensational first record, *Sink Or Swim*. With only four songs, it's hard to make the same impact, but after catching a lot of people's attention with the debut, the four-piece capitalise on that interest here rather than repeat themselves. That's not to say that they've drastically changed their approach – their heartfelt working class gems still draw equally on the Springsteen and Strummer songbooks – but having already won a reputation, they go for songs that grow on you rather than grabbing you instantly.

But even though musically the tunes don't have quite the same immediacy, Brian Fallon's lyrics are even better and more evocative than ever – especially *Wherefore Art Thou, Elvis?*, which is far more poetic than its jokey title might have you believe – and in the long run, these four tracks are just as addictive as already-classics like *Drive*.

The title of the gentle *Blue Jeans And White T-Shirts* is a good indicator of their aesthetic, and a pretty decent description of their audience demographic, although judging by their exhilarating recent show at Enigma, it could be refined by adding *...And Sleeve Tattoos And Scruffy Beards*. While the band may wear their influences on their sleeves as plainly as their tattoos (*We sing with our heroes, 33 rounds per minute*, Fallon proclaims), their songs are so honest and rewarding that it doesn't matter.

The EP's Australian release only just preceded their sophomore album, *The '59 Sound*, but hopefully *Senior And The Queen* won't be overshadowed by its full-length brother. Buy them both!

Owen Heltmann



▶ **ONE NIGHT ONLY**
Issue 1000

Started A Fire (Mercury/UMA)

So many great bands come out of the UK you would think that there would be an equal number of crap bands trying to get noticed. Well, well, well! One Night Only are one such band that have tried, but aren't really any good. As their name implies, I think this sums up how long their career will last - especially after admitting to playing covers of blink 182 and New Found Glory in the earlier days. While they have clearly moved away from this punk influence it doesn't do anything to change the fact that this album is terrible beyond all proportions and isn't worthy of being used as a drink coaster.

Debut album *Started A Fire* could be summed as a really awful bag of mixed lollies. The first might taste okay, but the rest is fucking awful. *Just For Tonight* flirts with the notion of being reasonably okay and while it might get the foot tapping it isn't enough to save the rest of the album from being diabolical. *It's About Time* and the debut single *You And Me* follow a formula that is far too generic for my liking. The diversity is clearly lacking – one single doesn't make an album and these lads really should stay in their garage and piss the neighbours off instead. If this is the best of the new crop, we're in trouble!

Rob Lyon



▶ **MARTIN MARTINI & THE BONE PALACE ORCHESTRA**
Issue 1000

We're All Just Monkeys (Red Balloon)

Martin Martini could very well be one of the nicest insane people you could meet! After surviving a near-fatal car crash and a broken heart, Martini has laid his hands on his piano and practiced a bit of self-therapy to create his second album. Although a hint of his regular vaudeville-styled tuba and violin remains, Martini has opted for a more guitar driven recording to highlight his desolation and sadness in a mainly upbeat and chaotic album that highlights the internal madness that he deals with daily.

Opening with a great monologue about a human-hating, human-eating monkey who falls in love with a sardine, *Monkey And Sardine* is followed by the mellow (*Love You Like A Knife*). Contortionist Captain Frodo rates a mention in the rebellious *We're All Gonna Die*, a quick-paced Rage Against The Machine-styled guitar and brass tune, as is *Dancing Up The Walls* with his fast-talking rant on life.

Bicycles is a sweet piano piece (albeit the shortest song on the album) as is *The Men Who Don't Fit In*, which is also one of my favourite songs he has offered up. The dark Nick Cave-ish *Wildman* is a nice way to end the album.

Intense and discontent, Martini is a fantastic wordsmith: clever, fun, sarcastic and cryptic. This is not your regular heartbreak album. The chaos is catchy and playful. One of these days I'm going to actually take this CD out of my stereo.

The words are supplied for your perusal within the amazing yet grotesque graphics of the cover booklet. I love love love this album.

Catherine Blanch