CASHBOX MAGAZINE REVIEWS FOR MARCH 01/05/11 19:29



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February 22, 2010

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#### Cashbox Magazine

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NEW REVIEWS FOR THIS WEEK February 22.



















--JUMPMENU--

#### Alicia Keys ... Back to Top



Alicia Kevs The Element of Freedom

J Records

#### SOUL Reviewed 01-06-10 Alicia Keys 🧼 The Element of Freedom

Perfection is an all too often sought after commodity. The perfect female musician would have to possess the songcrafting skills of Carole King, the vocal range of Ella Fitzgerald and the longevity of Madonna. Maybe perfect would be a bad term for that search, as it isn't a search at all. For all of music's best and beyond, look no further than Alicia Keys.

From the opening notes of "Songs In A Minor", Alicia Keys has redefined all preconceived boundaries of what is possible in a career. Her latest album, "The Element of Freedom" simply establishes her as the best artist to emerge in music in the last decade. Many thought Alicia Keys might have peaked with her recent duet on Jay-Z's "Empire State of Mind," but that simply was not the case. On the contrary, she was just getting warmed up.

The album's first single, "Try Sleeping With a Broken Heart" is already climbing the pop charts, sure to hit number one. It encapsulates the album's overall theme, making it through lost love, and finding yourself better off at the other end. It is one of many tracks sure to empower both men and women who have had to leave a bad situation before it got worse.

My personal favorite song has got to be "Un-Thinkable(I'm Ready)." It tackles the subject of getting started with a new relationship when doubt and questions surround you and yours. "If we do the unthinkable, would it make us look crazy? If you ask me, I'm ready." I can actually relate pretty well to that lyric, and I absolutely appreciate Ms. Keys for nailing an emotional point on the head.

Being born in 1976, I can honestly say that, in my lifetime, there has not been a better all around talent than Alicia Keys. Her tireless spirit and love of music translates to works of art each time she releases an album. I believe that years from now, "The Element of Freedom" will be viewed as her finest hour in a career that may well be just hitting it's apex. Give your soul an early Valentines' gift, and pick up





"The Element of Freedom" today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Alt Tal ... Back to Top



Alt Tal Open The Gates!

Aural Imaging

JAZZ Reviewed 01-12-10 Alt Tal 🥯 Open The Gates!

One of the tougher genres of music to find success in would be jazz. It takes an incredible amount of dedication, commitment, and respect for the art form in order to construct an album that finds it's way to a welcoming audience. One band that should have a fairly easy time finding receptive fans would be Alt Tal.

With "Open The Gates!", the band's latest effort, Alt Tal has established themselves as players in the modern jazz game. They create solid tracks that exhibit their abilities and showcase their ability to flow together in an ensemble.

The album's closing cut, "Elaine", is my personal favorite. It is a sonic journey into the limits of the imagination. I'd recommend it for any "road trip" mix on your digital

All told, "Open The Gates!" is a sincere attempt to create a modern jazz album that will stand the test of time. I feel Alt Tal has hit the mark in this attempt, and I look forward to hearing what comes next from the band.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Amy Clawson ... Back to Top



Amy Clawson The Woman I Am

BSW records

COUNTRY Reviewed 02-03-10 Amy Clawson 🧼 The Woman I Am

Amy Clawson is the next big thing in country music. She has the voice of an established superstar, and the soul of a pioneer. In each of the tracks on "The Woman I Am", it is clear that Ms. Clawson is a force to be reckoned with on the country charts for decades to come, and it should be one heck of a ride.

Not since Faith Hill's "Take Me As I Am" album has a female country release packed so much ounch. There is not a weak track throughout the album, and it is clear that Amy Clawson is a fan of music herself, as she made a point to not disappoint her listeners, creating a sound worth sharing for generations to come.

Of all the cuts on this instant classic, I'll take "Rainin' In Vegas" as my personal favorite. It blends top notch instrumentation with the stellar lyrics coming forth from Clawson's voice, soon to be that of a worldwide sensation.

It isn't often one gets to see a star on the way up. Do yourself a favor, and pick up a copy of Amy Clawson's "The Woman I Am". She may well be the biggest thing in music at this time next year.



Angel Taylor ... Back to Top



POP Reviewed 01-27-10 Angel Taylor Love Travels

Great pop music will always be in fashion. Simple, easy to follow lyrics and beautiful





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Angel Taylor Love Travels

Aware/Columbia

voices have translated in massive sales for pop stars for several generations. The latest pop princess to catch the nation's attention is Angel Taylor, and her reign has only just begun.

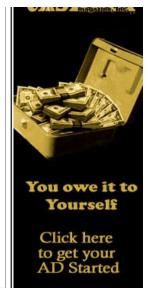
Blending her natural talents with top shelf production, "Love Travels" is a sure fire hit maker. Featuring at least five tracks likely to climb the digital download charts, the album is a solid collection of radio friendly numbers that keep it light and aim to bring smiles to the faces of the listener. An easy comparison to make would be with pop star Colbie Caillat. I have a feeling that at next year's awards show's Ms. Taylor's name just might be called once or twice.

Of all the songs on "Love Travels," I'll pick "Make Me Believe" as the best. It paints a picture of emotion and feelings that any college student would be likely to relate to. Sometimes actions are needed when words just don't cut it, and this track tells that tale with precision.

Angel Taylor is a songbird just starting to take flight. I look forward to hearing her albums come out for years to come. Take a ride on Angel Taylor's "Love Travels" today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams





#### Arsenal ... Back to Top



Arsenal Insects

Condensation Sounds

### MINIMAL TECHNO HOUSE Reviewed 02-22-10 Arsenal Insects

From the world of dance halls and house music come Arsenal, a Minnesota act earning rave reviews and packing clubs all over the Midwest with their unique style of urban techno. "Insects", their most recent album, is packed with beats to keep the party going all night long.

Long a popular form of music, minimal techno house is catching on nationwide, with pulsing rhythms and sounds to keep the audience moving with all cares cast aside as the dance floor becomes a haven for good feelings and no drama.

I got the chance to attend an Arsenal show a while back, and the band definitely has the gift of capturing their audience with the sounds heading out, and the power to keep the dancing going and the drinks flowing. Catching these guys live is a great opportunity to let yourself free and forget whatever bothered you during the day.

With future projects coming down the pipeline, Arsenal is sure to be putting out tracks for years to come. Don't be surprised to hear a few of the hypnotic works of Arsenal sampled on some of your favorite hip hop artists' albums sometime soon.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Brady Clark ... Back to Top



Brady Clark Bull Mountain Man

**Bull Mountain Music** 

## COUNTRY Reviewed 02-18-10 Brady Clark Bull Mountain Man

Country music is the perfect tonic for a tired day, and Brady Clark has some fine elixir for the masses. "Bull Mountain Man" is honest American storytelling from a down home son of the South. If only the rest of the music world was as authentic as his songs.

The latest release from the up and coming Bull Mountain Music label, "Bull Mountain Man" is a refreshing escape back to easier times, when music warmed the soul and lyrics were easy to follow. Any fan of Conway Twitty will enjoy this album, a change of pace from the modern country that has abandoned the genre's roots.

Of all the cuts on "Bull Mountain Man", I enjoyed "Cold Day In Hell" the best. The track shares the tale of a man who has reached the end of his rope and decides to stand his ground. We've all been pretty fed up with the way things are from time to time, and sometimes, we all have to say enough is enough. The perfect song to play when driving away from a bickering session at home.

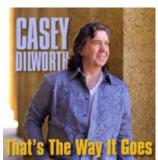
Music doesn't need to be complicated to warm your heart, and "Bull Mountain Man" does just that. It'll keep you dancing, or at least tappin' your steering wheel on a

commute to work. Give Brady Clark's latest a try today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Casey Dilworth That's The Way It Goes

Pineview Studio Group

## COUNTRY Reviewed 02-03-10 Casey Dilworth That's The Way It Goes

Honest country music speaks from the heart and tells the story of the artist. Casey Dilworth is just that; an honest artist with a story to tell, and a gift that makes his story worth listening to. "That The Way It goes" is a great American country album, and Casey Dilworth is a terrific storyteller.

There is no more authentic genre of music than country western, and Dilworth is real to the bone. His stories take you back to the days of Hank Williams and Woody Guthrie, of artists who told the tales of so many forgotten souls struggling to make it along life's path. The best message to be gained from "That's The Way It Goes" is that we all have a hard road to walk, but we are never alone.

I find it hard to judge art when it comes from the heart. Casey Dilworth's latest is simply a pure gift from an artist to the world. I feel that anyone with a little trouble making it from month to month, without any real hope in sight might feel a little bit better after listening to this album.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Christine Amanda ... Back to Top



Christine Amanda Teach Me How To Dream

C1S

## GOSPEL Reviewed 02-03-10 Christine Amanda → Teach Me How To Dream

Christine Amanda has a great voice, and a special gift to share. She loves the Lord, and she counts her blessings daily. Anyone with a gift such as hers is a fool not to share it, and she definitely shares the wealth of her voice with her latest release, "Teach me How To Dream."

While blending Biblical messages with a modern sound, Amanda invites her audience into her own special world of promise and hope. Her music is a welcome change of pace from the cynical and dreary hits of the day. Rather than dwell on what's going wrong, the music of Christine Amanda lifts you up, and reminds you that things can always get better.

"Without Walls" is just one example of the talent and power in Amanda's voice. She is an artist of epic proportions, and her love of her craft shows throughout the album, a must for any fan of modern gospel music.

The world would be better off with a few more smiles. I honestly feel that Christine Amanda might be the cure for the winter blues. Pick up a copy of "Teach Me How To Dream" today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Dan Adler ... Back to Top



JAZZ Reviewed 01-06-10

Dan Adler 
All Things Familiar

There is something to be said for modern jazz. One school of thought dictates that



Dan Adler All Things Familiar

**Emdan Music** 

the new releases in this genre pale in comparison to the classics of genrations past. It takes a strong will to put forth a great jazz album these days, and Dan Adler has done just that with "All Things Familiar."

A student of the craft in the best sense of the word, Dan Adler takes a page from the book of jazz greats and writes his own chapter. His assembled musicians compliment him very well, and the result is a well produced musical shot in the arm. From start to finish, "All Things Familiar" is clearly the result of accomplished artists looking to put forth an effort comparable to the all time greats.

The closing track, "Bird's Idea", is a fitting end to the album. It combines all the crucial elements of jazz with the respect all great artists have for their audience. An absolutely seamless entry into any IPod jazz folder.

Sometimes, music just works. It can clear the head and unlock the imagination. With "All Things Familiar", Dan Adler has delivered a gift to the musical world; the best of new jazz with props paid to those who paved the way.



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Dan Menzone Frostbite

LC Productions

#### BLUEGRASS Reviewed 01-12-10 Dan Menzone **Frostbite**

There is something special about bluegrass music. The sound of the accoustic instruments, the feeling in the lyrics, it just takes me back to a simpler time in music when song crafting was more en vogue than production tricks. A great example of new bluegrass is "Frostbite", the lastest album from banjo legend Dan Menzone.

Authenticity can be hard to find in the music world these days, and thank goodness there is nothing fake about Menzone and his talented band. They work together to unwrap a musical gift for the listener, reaching back to the genre's roots and delivering a modern spin on this classic American art form.

"Pallet On Your Floor" is my top pick for the album. It spins a story of a man whose audience depends on his level of success. "Come all you good time friends of mine. Tell me where did you go when I only had a dime?" Hard to imagine anyone who can't relate to that.

From start to finish, "Frostbite" is a new classic in bluegrass music. It would make a fine addition to any diverse music collection. Let Dan Menzone tell you a tale or two todav.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Daughtry ... Back to Top



Daughtry Leave This Town

RCA Records

ROCK Reviewed 02-22-10 Daughtry Leave This Town

Getting massive exposure through the American Idol show, Chris Daughtry had a leg up from the start. His self titled album "Daughtry" went multi platinum with a handful of top 20 hits scattered throughout. There is always the question of avoiding the sophomore jinx when an artist puts out the follow up to platinum success, and Daughtry has crushed that notion with a bang.

Recently certified as platinum, "Leave This Town" is Daughtry's second album, and the work that ends his brief stay in the "one hit wonder" category. A bona fide superstar with repeat platinum success, Daughtry showcases his diverse musical talents throughout this record. While "Leave This Town" may not have quite as many chart toppers as it's predecessor, it stands up as a solid rock album by one of the newest stars on the music scene.

"What I Meant To Say" is easily the album's best track. Cutting right to the core of a widespread problem - unrequitted love- it delivers a potent message that is likely shared by countless people wondering why the other person in their relationship isn't as committed to making things work as they are. "I just thought that you should know that I've been holding on while you've been letting go." Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to give up on somebody, but if it's only one person fighting to keep things

going, it just might not be worth it.

I am very happy that I managed to get tickets to a Daughtry concert this summer, and I am sure he will put on one heck of a show. He might not have won his season of AI, but he has sure left almost all of the show's competitors in the dust as far as record sales are concerned. Pick up a copy of "Leave This Town" in stores or online today. 1,000,000 other Daughtry fans can't be wrong.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Dave Matthews Band Big Whiskey & the GrooGrux King

**RCA Records** 

### ROCK Reviewed 02-22-10 Dave Matthews Band

### Big Whiskey & the GrooGrux King

When Dave Matthews Band had their first taste of national fame, the world was mired in the genre of grunge. The repetitive, often times monotonous sounds coming from Seattle may well have opened the door for a successful surge in hip hop sales, and for music that didn't have as it's general theme depression and self loathing. 1994's "Under The Table and Dreaming" could not have come at a better time, and Dave Matthews Band hasn't really slowed down ever since.

"Big Whiskey & the GrooGrux King", the band's latest effort, has all the makings of an instant classic. Chock full of the horns and strings that redefined rock music in the mid-90's, the album continues to set the act apart from all the rest. In short, like with most Dave Matthews albums, it just might be impossible to be in a bad mood after giving this record a spin.

I'll call "Funny The Way It Is" the album's top track. Rarely does a Dave Matthews Band song sound much like anything else on the radio, and this track is no different. Whether in a crowd of 80,000 at an amphitheater seeing the band live, or sitting at home with a great cup of coffee, it's music like this that can truly heal the soul after a brutal day.

I have been a fan of this band for close to two decades now, and am very glad I found them way back in my freshman year of college. The world has changed quite a bit since then, but one thing has remained the same; Dave Matthews and his band can jam like nobody else. As long as they keep cutting records, I'll be here listening with a smile on my face.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Dizzy Gillespie "The Crossroads"

Indie

### Reviewed 02-22-10 Dizzy Gillespie "The Crossroads"

Hey all ... Well, here I go with another CD Review. Well to start out... I live in Austin, TX. and I've been blessed that I grew up in such a beautiful city with such a large musical following. I was sitting down at Starbucks (The Office) the other day w/ Tommy Shannon (Stevie Ray Vaughan's Bass Player) along w/a few other well-know musicians... Guys like Chris Layton, David Holt, Denny Freeman, Charlie & Will Sexton and others show up frequently to sit in at the round table listening to each other lies... lol !!! We even have our Infamous weatherman and TV Personality Mark Murray from KVUE TV – Austin there sitting in too. Charlie Sexton is on and off the road with Bob Dylan as his main Guit-Box player...

Anyway, once again I frequented my morning HANG-OUT for a cup of JOE and I noticed somebody I thought I knew sitting at the table, but just couldn't put my finger on where I had seen this guy before. I'm telling myself that he's probably a musician. Then as if a rock it me it the head, I finally realized where I saw him before... It was on YouTube doing an interview w/ the famous guitar pick-up guru Seymour Duncan at the 2010 NAMM Show... That's when I ask him... "Are you Dizzy Gillespie?" And he said "Yes" w/ a confused look on his face like he didn't know me... So I introduce myself and we exchange info and now I'm sitting here listening to Dizzy's wonderful NEW CD "The Crossroads" ...

If you like Blues / Rock w/ a southern flair then you've got to check out Mr. Gillespie's MySpace page to listen to his muse... I love his style because it takes me back when music really sounded good and had feeling and soul.... If you like these

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following bands, then you'll Love what Dizzy has going on... If the early to mid-70's rock is your thing, ya know... Folks like Pat Travers, Montrose, Allman Brothers, Dickie Betts, Warren Haynes, Robin Trower, Johnny Winters... Vocally - Dizz has a great bluesman's vocals in the likes of Jeff Healy and Greg Allman..., then these songs are right up you musical alley.

As I was talkin' w/ Dizz, he was telling me that what inspires him these days is going to the VA hospitals and playing his heartfelt / soulful music to the returning Vets from Iraq and Afghanistan... He would like to do a tour for our comrades in arms to let them know they are not lost or forgotten as long as we here at home keep vigil and never let that watchtowers light go out!!!

**Best Songs:** "Thunder", "Boomerang, "Livin' On", "J.C.'s Blues" and "Blues Singer", "33 to 19", and lastly, "More Than You Need"...

Parting Shot Across the Bow... "A CD TO HELP SHORTEN YOUR LONG ROAD TRIPS... This is One Album you can listen to and enjoy many times over." I truly give this Album 2 thumbs up 4.5 Starz.

http://www.myspace.com/dizzgillespie

Scott Thomas www.Guitarz-for-ever.com



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Frankie McNeill and the Counts Old Dog, New Tricks

Banana Tree Records

BEACH Reviewed 02-22-10

#### Frankie McNeill and the Counts Old Dog, New Tricks

Nothing makes the last few weeks of winter go by a little quicker than some great beach music. The rhythm of the music and the feelings in the words just make most people want to get barefoot and do some shag dancing. The latest from Frankie McNeill and the Counts is a prime example of that; music that makes you notice that Spring is right around the corner.

"Old Dog, New Tricks" is an album sure to get folks out of their seats and onto the floor from coast to coast. McNeill's mastery of his electric guitar shines through in each track. While taking on themes as diverse as love, loss, and love again, the release is a great example of a talented musician taking care to see that their art is ready for a wide audience.

"New York Minute" would be my favorite cut on the album. McNeill and his bandmates shine on this song, likely to rise up the beach charts in no time flat. Give him a month or so, and I've got a feeling that the charts might just have more than one track from "Old Dog, New Tricks."

Overall, the album is terrific. I'd recommend it to anyone planning a Spring Break vacation from the snowy North to the glorious South. Put "Old Dog, New Tricks" in your car the next time a road trip comes your way.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Glory 2 Glory We've Won The Victory

GOSPEL Reviewed 01-12-10 Glory 2 Glory We've Won The Victory

Some of my fondest musical memories are from church ensembles and choirs. The way the groups could deliver God's message with such passion and beuatiful voices always made me smile. Glory 2 Glory are no different. They deliver their art with care and skill, and leave the audience yearning for more.

"We've Won The Victory" is the latest release from this act. It delivers substantial amounts of soul and purpose with each track, and the end result of the album is clear. Glory 2 Glory love what they do, and live to serve Jesus.

I'll pick "Saved In the Nick of Time" as the best song on the album. It perfectly paints a picture of the experience many of us have had, in barely surviving life's traumas

#### First Love Records

with nobody to thank but the Almighty. It is refreshing to hear musicians simply telling it like it is.

There will never be a better time to catch up on your prayers than right now. With most of the world either at war, poverty-stricken or disease ravaged, it is clear that we might not have too much time left here. Get right with God, and let Glory 2 Glory help you find Him.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Gospel Outlaws ... Back to Top



Gospel Outlaws Wanted

**Dove Olive Branch Records** 

### GOSPEL Reviewed 01-12-10 Gospel Outlaws Wanted

Take a little bit of gospel, a little bit of blues, and a whole lot of Southern Rock, mix it together, and you've got The Gospel Outlaws. These guys might be the best thing to happen to music in years.

"Wanted" is an instant classic in the field of gospel/rock. These folks can have the soul of a choir and the chops of Lynyrd Skynyrd. Each cut on the album was clearly the result of caring artists who have their listeners in mind when releasing their work. The only thing brighter than the messages on "Wanted" is the future of the band down the road.

Of the album's 14 songs, I enjoyed "Right Way To Go" the best. Anyone who's been faced with difficult choices on which path to take in their lives will appreciate this track, a genuine heart warmer, and likely hit on the gospel charts.

Life isn't always easy. If you can make it through the day without blowing up, sometimes that is all you can hope for. Let "Wanted" by The Gospel Outlaws help you unwind after your next rough day at the office. You'll be glad you did.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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GR Project Sculptures in Time

WUC Records

### JAZZ Reviewed 01-06-10 GR Project Sculptures in Time

There is no better way to warm up on a cold winter day than with a hot cup of coffee and as great jazz record. As far as the coffee goes, you're on your own; the music would be amply handled by the GR Project's tribute to Chillida, "Sculptures in Time."

Smooth as silk, the GR Project artfully weave in and out of timeless jazz themes, at times conjuring images of Miles Davis in SoHo or Coltrane in The Big Easy. The five musicians who make up the GR Project are all cut from the same cloth as the all-time greats in their genre, exhibiting pride in their work by releasing an album that speaks just as loudly to their skills as their place in history.

"Ainara" is likely to be a fast riser on the jazz charts. It's hypnotic flow blends smoothly with the sounds of artisans at their best. Catching this act live would be an awesome experience.

Give "Sculptures in Time" a listen the next time you're shopping for jazz. I have no doubt you'll be just as pleased with it as I was.  $\hat{\ }$ 

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Heidi Montag ... Back to Top

DANCE Reviewed 01-19-10



Heidi Montag Superficial

Pratt Productions

#### Heidi Montag 🧼 Superficial

Fame can disappear as quickly as it's grasped on to. Those lucky enough to grab the attention of the public should make full use of that attention. After hearing Heidi Montag's "Superficial" album I am certain of two things: that it would be great if Heidi would be more selective in her Twitter posts, and that the girl can make herself a pretty solid dance album.

In the style of Paula Abdul, Montag makes no apologies in putting out a collection of dance music. The beats are sure to keep people moving on the club floors nationwide, and the lyrics are a safe bet to take up yearbook space this spring.

The album's platinum bar in the rough is "Blackout." Every once in a while two people get together and have the world struggling to not look or talk about them. It's the private world Heidi & Mr. Pratt enjoy that she sings abouts with the line, "Leave the rest of them in the dark. No one has to know where we are.

Not too long ago, pop albums that got people dancing ruled the world. It wouldn't shock me at all if Heidi Montag has a career for years as part of the new pop revival.



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Holly Hofmann and Bill Cunliffe Three's Company

Capri

JAZZ Reviewed 01-27-10

#### Holly Hofmann and Bill Cunliffe Three's Company

In the more than two decades that flautist Holly Hofmann has been on the scene, she has recorded numerous CDs as leader, more often than not for Capri. Though pianist Bill Cunliffe has been active slightly longer than she, he has recorded much more frequently, many times as leader but also as sideman with Buddy Rich, Gerald Wiggins, the Clayton brothers, and others. Both classically trained, Hofmann and Cunliffe have recorded together off-and-on for fifteen years, often as a duo. Their new release includes four duet performances, plus four trio selections, with a different instrumentalist accompanying them on each: violinist Regina Carter, drummer Alvester Garnett, clarinetist Ken Peplowski, and trumpeter Terell Stafford. Cunliffe composed four of the eight pieces; Hofmann, one.

Classically trained musicians performing jazz sometimes lack emotion, do not swing adequately, and fail to take chances because of their natural inclination to play "correctly" and subordinate themselves to the score and conductor. Even though what might be called their formalism (in technique, and in playing compositions and not just blowing) is obvious throughout, Hofmann and Cunliffe interact engagingly, improvise well, convey emotion, and swing when appropriate. They are most forceful toward the conclusion of Burton Lane's "Too Late Now," where Hofmann, close to overblowing, plays grittily.

Attractively as they play as a duo, the leaders seem inspired by their guests, Stafford in particular. This trio's performance of Hofmann's "Three's Company" includes fiery solo interaction. Using only brushes on Cunliffe's "Sweet Andy," Garnett introduces the tune, provides fills, and propels the leaders. The trio performance, with Carter, of Billy Strayhorn's "Star-Crossed Lovers" is sheer beauty. Cunliffe's "Reunion," with Peplowski, largely requires the playing of a written score, which means that solos are of secondary importance.

On Three's Company, Hofmann and Cunliffe create attractive music while respecting compositions and exploring their nuances.

James Cain & Nickajack ... Back to Top



**COUNTRY** Reviewed 02-22-10 James Cain & Nickajack

Lucky Scars

I've got a feeling that country music will be putting out records long after the modern



James Cain & Nickajack Lucky Scars

**Brayton Mountain Records** 

twists on other genres have come and gone. James Cain & Nickajack are great examples of authentic country artists holding true to their musical style, without changing too much to endear themselves to the styles of the day.

As authentically American as apple pie and the World Series, "Lucky Scars" is country western at it's finest. James Cain and the members of Nickajack put out top shelf tunes that translate well for country fans young and old alike. While paying attention to see that their work has the quality of the past with lyrics to suit most listeners, this band knows where it's at.

I'll pick "Workin' Man" as the top track from this record. There is nothing wrong with a blue collar, and this song lets the listener know it. All too often the workers of this country are forgotten when their jobs are shipped abroad to save a few bucks. It's songs like this that keep the spirit alive for the men and women fighting each day to work with pride to keep this country moving.

I am a fan of most styles of music, but there is a special place in my heart for the storytelling greats of country western. I have a feeling that Nickajack may well be spinning tales to share for quite a while. Give "Lucky Scars" a listen the next time you get a chance to kick your boots off and put your feet up.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Jane Johnson An Old Story

Cashbox Records

### NEW AGE Reviewed 01-06-10 Jane Johnson An Old Story

Tranquility is getting harder and harder to find. With a new year upon us, and the hustle and bustle of the holidays behind us, now is the perfect time to relax, kick your feet up, and escape into a world of beautiful music. The soundtrack for such an endeavour would be Jane Johnson's "An Old Story."

After listening to this album a few times, I literally had no idea what my major drama of the day was. It completely removed me from the stress and day-to-day grind of life and wrapped me up in a warm blanket of melodies and sound. This release would be perfect for new parents, a virtual guarantee for a good night's sleep for the young and old alike.

Of all the tracks on "An Old Story", I enjoyed "Somewhere Tonight" the most. It seemed to capture the perfect mix of musical flow with ethereal sounds, reminding me of early Enya recordings.

While the holidays are over, there is no bad time of year to give the gift of heartwarming music. Surprise somebody with the blessings of Jane Johnson's "An Old Story" today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Jason Isbell
Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit

Lightning Rod Records

ROCK Reviewed 01-19-10

Jason Isbell 

The 400 Unit

If you're like me, you prefer an album with real guitar, drums, and lyrics. Right about now, it seems there's quite a demand for music fabricated in a production studio, and authentic rock isn't getting much airplay. That doesn't matter to me much, because I'll take an actual rock album over the latest ringtone packed concoction from the knob turners any day of the week. With that being said, allow me to share the latest from Jason Isbell.

"Jason Isbell & The 400 Unit" is all that's great about American rock music. He is a throwback to the 80's, evoking memories of Springsteen, Bryan Adams and ZZ Top. He takes time on his lyrics, telling stories that the average person can relate to, but with talent that is anything but common.

"Cigarettes and Wine" is pure gold. A song made for slow dancing a half hour before bar close, it's all about finding someone that you're still thinking about years after you've said goodbye. "She smelled like cigarettes & wine, but she kept me happy all the time. I know it ain't mutual, but it's the God's honest truth. She lives

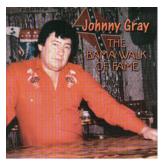
down inside of me still, rolled up like a twenty dollar bill. She left me alone with these pills, and the last of my youth."

It's not always easy to find good music in parts of the country. Some communities don't have independent music stores and are limited to retail outlets. It might take a drive, but consider your nearest independent music store your musical MD, and a dose of Jason Isbell your prescription.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Johnny Gray ... Back to Top



Johnny Gray The Bama Walk Of Fame

**Emerald Records** 

### COUNTRY Reviewed 02-22-10 Johnny Gray The Bama Walk Of Fame

Good country music doesn't need a lot of fancy bells & whistles. If it's authentic, the music will speak for itself with well written lyrics and stories worth listening to. Johnny Gray's "The Bama Walk Of Fame" is just that; a prime of example of simplicity translating into quality music.

From Nashville's Emerald Records, "The Bama Walk Of Fame" is a shot in the arm for those who have lost touch with modern country. Quite a few folks get tired when they can't tell if they're listening to a new pop or a watered down country song trying to change genres. Johnny Gray is true country through and through, and his respect for the style shines through with each song.

"Simple Goodbye" is one of the more emotional songs on the album. It is a tale of finding the words to walk away when everything else has been said. A simple song with a powerful message, I could see it getting a lot of airplay on college radio throughout NASCAR country.

In the big picture, music is supposed to brighten the mood and wrap up a rough day a little better. I hope Johnny Gray finds his way to your record collection soon. I am sure glad he found his way to mine.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Jon Gomm ... Back to Top



Don't Panic

Performing Chimp Records

### Reviewed 01-27-10 Jon Gomm ■ Don't Panic

Jon Gomm is an English singer-songwriter and virtuoso performer, using one acoustic guitar to create drum sounds, bass lines and melodies simultaneously. His songs draw on a range of influences and styles, including blues and soul. Michael Hedges is an important source of inspiration. To date he has two solo albums and has toured full-time since 2004.

I received Leeds-based guitarist / singer-songwriter Jon Gomm's NEW CD "Don't Panic". I have been listening to his album for a few weeks now and it really grows on you. If you like Acoustic Guitar in the style of Dave Matthews and / or John Mayer w/ a twist, then this music will definitely be very enticing to your aural senses. However, I do hear many more influences in his fabulous music and awesome guitar playing. I hear influences of funk to heavy hard rock music being played in his engaging, aggressive and percussive way. Jon Gomm is definitely an energizing personality on his guitar. I went back to his MySpace bio to see "what's up" and as I suspected, his influence are far and vast with such other great innovative virtuoso musicians and recording artists...

Check out some of these cats that have help shape and Influenced Jon's music: Michael Hedges, Robert Johnson, Radiohead, Steve Vai, Miles Davis, Joni Mitchell, The Beatles (particularly Paul), Jennifer Batten, Lamb, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, Nick Harper, Bukka White, The Screaming Headless Torsos, Steve Earle, John Coltrane, Jimi Hendrix, Nuno, Rage Against the Machine, Stevie Wonder, Nirvana, Prince, Steve Earl, Tommy Emmanuel, Preston Reed, Taj Mahal, Jeff Buckley, Robben Ford, Joe Satriani, Goldie, Keb Mo, Kings X, Soundgarden, Earth Wind and Fire, Richie Kotzen, Angelo Paladino, Scott Henderson, Blur, Dolly Parton, Bjork, Stanley Jordan and a lot of others.

As I listen to Jon's Album you can't help but not get into his uncanny grooves and

warm but rich vocals. Jon also covers a wide variety of music and genres. He can go from Blues to Rock, and then to some Jazz-Fusion to Country music. This acoustic maestro is totally a one man's melting pot of forged sound. As I read in the liner notes, there are no overdubs on this challenging but pleasurable music. Like another Hedges disciple, Andy Mckee "Drifting", Jon similarly uses just his guitar to treat one to a miniature symphonic experience.

Overall, I give this CD 4 STARZ because Jon Gomm's cd "Don't Panic" is not only wonderful to listen too, it is sonically interesting w/ each new song probing the boundaries of music's never ending NEW Frontiers

Scott Thomas www.guitarz-for-ever.com www.jongomm.com



#### Kenny & Leah ... Back to Top



Kenny & Leah
April in Paris
Cashbox Records

## SOUL Reviewed 01-06-10 Kenny & Leah April in Paris

Kenny & Leah are a classic example of a duo working together to create a gift for their audience. Their passion for creativity is all too apparent in their latest release, "April in Paris." Any fan of vintage Sonny & Cher will enjoy this album, a throwback to the musical age where duets dominated the charts.

Leah McCoy Soderblom has a voice sent straight from heaven. Evoking shades of Carly Simon, she handles each track on the album with the flawless touch of a master sculptor, taking songs that many may have forgotten, and reshaping them into new classics of modern soul music.

"Moon River" would be my choice for top song. It establishes Soderblom's voice as brilliant while leaving space for solid insturmental work. This would be an ideal track for an anniversary dance.

In short, "April in Paris" is a hit, and Kenny & Leah will likely have plenty more down the road.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### KeSha ... Back to Top

Animal



Animal
RCA Records

R+B/HIP-HOP Reviewed 02-09-10 **KeSha** 

Exploding the dance floors from South Beach to Vancouver, the newest sensation in music is Ke\$ha. Her attitude is just what second semester freshmen need to hear to keep going to class, and become sophomores. It's that type of optimism to get what you want first, leave the "how-to manual" in the box, that this country needs right now.

Certain to to fill IPod's worldwide, Ke\$ha's hits are giving a shot in the arm to the music industry, which doesn't see many female rockers that often. I would hope she takes things slow. Long term success at the rates of Pink or Sheryl Crow wouldn't surprise me.

The hot song out now is "Tik ToK", a mayhem filled explosion of sound to rival any of the hip hop acts of the 90's. Ke\$ha has the #1 album in the country, and for a good reason. Get out and get KeSha's "Animal" today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Lil Wayne ... Back to Top

HIP HOP Reviewed 02-18-10



Lil Wayne Rebirth

### Lil Wayne Rebirth

As a fan of all types of music, I have about as open an ear as you can hope to find. My tastes generally lean towards rock, but I'll throw on a great hip hop album and spit lyrics with the best of them. The latest release from Lil Wayne is an absolute waste of a download. If he wasn't sitting in prison already, he'd probably be charged with impersonating a musician.

Soaked to the core with the ridicuolous excuse for music that is Auto-Tune, "Rebirth" is the death of music. The lyrics are so juvenile and tasteless, I forgot the "singer" was the hip hop legend that coined the term "bling bling" early in his career, and instead went scurrying for the "Chris Gaines" rock album, thinking that maybe the critics were a bit too harsh on that one.

As a hip hop act, Lil Wayne has dominated the charts, including first week sales in excess of 1.5 million units upon the release of "The Carter III" album, helping him become a four time Grammy winner. This time out, it's clear that he just didn't give a care about anything, putting forth a piece of work so awful that made me yearn for the production standards of Vanilla Ice's "Ninja Rap."

When he gets out of prison, I highly recommend Lil Wayne get back to rapping. He made a fool of himself and every person who actually bought this album. Unless you are a fan of tasteless garbage, avoid "Rebirth" as if it's a JetBlue ticket to Guadalajara.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Mary J. Blige ... Back to Top



Mary J. Blige Stronger With Each Tear Geffen

# R&B Reviewed 01-12-10 Mary J. Blige Stronger With Each Tear

In the early 90's, a little known label called Uptown Records, and an unknown producer named Sean Combs delivered Mary J. Blige's debut album, "What's The 411?" Right from the start, Mary J. Blige has been blazing a trail straight to the top of the R+B charts, and she shows no sign of slowing down with her latest, "Stronger With Each Tear."

A sure dance hall hit, the album's title track is all over the TV and radio. Up tempo, and with the futuristic sounds of many of today's biggest hitmakers, it puts forth notice that Mary J. Blige is still coming strong, and she has no plans whatsoever to slow down.

The album's collection of featured artists is stellar. Akon is just one of many singers whose collaborative efforts make this album a bona fide money maker, with 7 or 8 cuts likely to see major numbers in the digital music download charts.

My pick for top song on "Stronger With Each Tear" would be "I Am." It paints a picture of a woman hoping her man remembers how she feels when he's miles away. "Think of all the love that you get from me that you can't find nowhere else." With Mary J. Blige's voice, the message is clear; give your man love worth coming home to, and you'll never be lonely.

I've been a big fan of Mary J. Blige ever since my sister brought her tape home from college. Her collaboration with Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man on "You're All I Need" is one of my favorite duets of all time. I am delighted to share that Mary J. Blige is back and better than ever. Grab your copy of "Stronger With Each Tear" today; and that's the 411!

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Nickelback ... Back to Top



ROCK Reviewed 02-22-10
Nickelback 

Dark Horse



Nickelback Dark Horse

Roadrunner Records

Most people's taste in music evolve over time. What sounded great in junior high generally is something you laugh about in your 30's. For anyone whose taste in music hasn't changed since 8th grade, I give you Nickelback's "Dark Horse."

Packed with lyrics and song themes that are about as complex as Pamela Anderson's neckline, Nickelback's brand of Canadian stripper rock is pretty lame. There are a few VH1-friendly tracks on the album, but most of this release is just a waste of time. Whenever you're listening to a song you've never heard, and one line into a stanza you can guess what the finale will be, it's as if you needn't bother listening at all. That happened to me four times while listening to "Dark Horse."

Of course the band needs to sell records, and so there are a few hits on the album, namely "Gotta Be Somebody." It tells a story of how a lonely soul is out there holding tight to the belief that there is someone out there for him. I wonder if the reason the guy in the song hasn't found anybody is that he spends so much time listening to Nickelback albums.

All that said, Nickelback has millions of fans worldwide for a reason. People like to get drunk, get into a big crowd and hear rock songs about sex. I've kinda been there and done that, and if given a choice, I'd pass next time around. The few decent tracks aside, the band should have entitled this one, "Glue Factory."

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Orianthi ... Back to Top



Orianthi Believe

Geffen

**POP** Reviewed 02-18-10

### Orianthi Believe

The next pop explosion is clearly happening. There are battle lines being drawn, separating simple studio creations from songwriters and musicians in the genre. Orianthi is leading the pack in the race for pop superstardom, and shattering the glass ceiling with her guitar.

"Believe" is a certain hit for years to come. A brilliant musician who has worked with Prince, among others, Orianthi is ready to begin a legendary career at full steam ahead. Her songcrafting talent is unmatched among her peers, and her guitar playing rivals that of the most experienced axe masters out there.

I'll take "Feels Like Home" as the album's biggest hit. The story of coming home to a world that has changed before your eyes is one I can relate to. "Because every moment now is what I believe somehow within my reality, oh now." It isn't always easy when the world you remembered meets the world that evolved while you were gone, and this song takes on that feeling perfectly.

Pop music has gotten a bad rap from all the over-produced under thought lyrics and songs that have come off the assembly line of late. Orianthi isn't even close to that. She has put forth a collection of music that will likely be an unattainable level for pop divas to hit in the future, but anything is possible when you "Believe."

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Pearl ... Back to Top



Pearl Little Immaculate White Fox

MRI

ROCK Reviewed 02-18-10



#### Little Immaculate White Fox

Blending a mix of Janis Joplin & Joan Osborne, Pearl is a rock n roll singer with the chops to stand tall with the best around, and the staying power to have quite a career. With a powerful voice destined for chart success, she is the newest star on the rock scene.

Without a doubt, Pearl is headed for great things this year. Her songwriting is on par with Norah Jones, with easy to follow lyrics and messages that are naturally relatable. It's hard to imagine somebody giving this album a listen and not understanding where the singer was coming from when she wrote it.

I'd have to say that "Broken White" is the album's best track. A hard charging tour de force of sound, it is sure to rise the digital music charts, tailor made for road trips. There really isn't a weak track throughout the collection, a sure sign of great things

to come from this emerging star on the music scene.

Rock music has taken it's lumps of late. With digital sounds and production studio gizmos dominating the airwaves, good old fashioned guitar rock can be hard to find. Well, you can end your search for the next big thing in rock music, as Pearl is a star sure to light up the musical sky this year. Look for her at your local music store the next time you are out & about.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Phish ... Back to Top



Phish Undermind Rhino/Elektra

ROCK Reviewed 01-19-10

### Phish **>**Undermind

The era of the jam band is not necessarily behind us. In the days of the Grateful Dead, most acts in their genre had a lot of catching up to do. When Jerry Garcia passed away in 1994, the mantle was passed to Phish. There are smiles stretching from Burlington to Haight-Asbury now that "Undermind", the band's first studio album in quite some time, is out. It was well worth the wait.

Trey Anastasio is a gift to anyone who has been lucky enough to see Phish play live. He understands the principle of giving the audience a good time and rewarding them for continuing to follow his group. With 1988's "Junta" being their debut album, the band is Rock n Roll Hall of Fame eligible in 2013, and I like their chances.

From beginning to end, "Undermind" is the perfect album for a multi-state road trip. The band continues their solid mastery of the jam, with each song demonstrating the skill and dedication that has kept the music flying off the shelves for close to 25 years. This album might not capture the audience it had during their late 90's peak, but true fans will put it right up on the shelf next to the band's classics.

It is hard for a great live act to replicate the experience on album. Phish's legacy is and always will be the thrill of seeing them live, in an endless field of people. While that aspect of the Phish experience can not be duplicated, the consistent supply of great rock music is still in abundance. Grab a copy of Phish's "Undermind", and have a nice day.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



RB Renegade ... Back to Top



RB Renegade Finding My Way

Seven Feathers Productions

## COUNTRY Reviewed 02-18-10 RB Renegade Finding My Way

I don't know about you, but for my money, country music is hard to beat. Without all the glitz, glamour, and production tricks of pop music, it seems that country western is the last authentic style of music. One of the better country storytellers I've listened to in a while is RB Renegade, and "Finding My Way" is a great example of American music at it's finest.

Recorded in Oak Grove Studios near Boston, "Finding My Way" is a prime example of country western from North of the Mason-Dixon line. RB Renegade demonstrates that the feelings behind some of the best music can come from surprising sources. They may not have much NASCAR or college football, but those Yankees do have a storyteller or two, and RB Renegade is one of the best.

RB's take on "House Of The Rising Sun" is pure gold. A song that has seen several transformations since Dave Van Ronk first wrote it in the early 60's, it has been passed down from Bob Dylan to The Animals, and RB Renegade definitely does the track justice, maintaining the original theme with just the right amount of country flavor.

There will never be a better time to kick your boots off and play a country album. All over the world, things are getting pretty crazy, and escapes can be hard to find. Whenever you get a minute away from the hustle & bustle of life, give RB Renegade's "Finding My Way" a spin; you'll be glad you did.



#### Rihanna ... Back to Top



Rihanna Rated R

Def Jam

POP Reviewed 01-19-10

### Rihanna <a> Rated R</a>

Strength endures through the most difficult time in your life. Rihanna's private life has been splashed across the tabloids for over a year, and through all her trials and tribulations, she has kept coming back, and has never lost sight of her ambition to be a star. With "Rated R", Rihanna has reached icon status, staring drama in the face and making it blink.

With a noticeably rougher edge to it, "Rated R" stands out as the most hard driving album Rihanna has released to date. A major step up from "Good Girl Gone Bad", the album showcases her ability to take punches from ex's and family members alike, while returning a flurry of empowering lyrics strong enough to score a knockout blow.

The current hit making the rounds on TV is "Hard" featuring Young Jeezy. The "no pain is forever" mantra in the song is well worth embracing. This is an artist proudly taking her place on a pedestal with Tina Turner, Whitney Houston, and many others who have broken free of a dangerous situation to find themselves still grasping their musical gift, all too eager to share with the world that they are better than ever.

I caught the Rihanna craze a few years back with "Umbrella." She took the world by storm with the hit, and "Rated R" should be no different. Scars heal. New days dawn. In the end, Rihanna is where she is because she knows never to quit. "Rated R" might not be for the kids, and that's fine. It wasn't a kid who put it out.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Ringo Starr ... Back to Top



Ringo Starr Y Not

Ringo Starr

POP Reviewed 01-27-10
Ringo Starr 

Y Not

The 60's may be over, but the spirit of peace & love will always live on. Ringo Starr does his part to keep allive the feelings of eras past with his latest effort, "Y Not." It might not be as groundbreaking and influential as "Sgt. Pepper's" or "Rubber Soul", but it keeps the heart of the peace movement beating with the message of togetherness that made he and his bandmates legends.

"Y Not" is Ringo Starr's statement to the music world that he is still relevant and capable of putting out solid material. With the recent passing of George Harrison and the 30th anniversary of John Lennon's death this December, it is up to Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney to continue the Liverpool Legacy into the new decade. With "Y Not", Starr shows he is up for the challenge.

Showing his savvy, Starr brought in Joss Stone for "Who's Your Daddy?", and the result is the album's highlight. Reaching out to one of the better voices in modern music exhibits Ringo Starr's ability to create an instant hit by involving a newer talent with his classic style. The song is a surefire chart climber and possible Grammy winner in 2011.

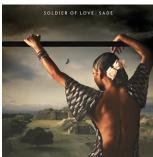
The world is better off with the music of John, Paul, George & Ringo. The band took music to another level, and helped pave the way for artists and entertainers to show their caring nature by supporting causes on a global level. Ringo Starr is still putting out hits today because his musical skills may well have only been topped by kis karma. Have a listen to "Y Not" and thank me later.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



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Sade Soldier of Love Epic

R+B Reviewed 02-09-10
Sade

#### Soldier of Love

The magic of Sade has returned, and it could not have come at a more perfect time. "Soldier of Love" is a return to the glory days of one of the world's most amazing voices. Still a hitmaker, Sade is now set to take on the world.

At long last, Sade can once again show the industry that her sultry voice is ready for climibng the charts and making the countdown. A sound that translates globally, there isn't a place on Earth where the voice of Sade hasn't filled stadiums and inspired dreams.

A soulful storyteller, Sade has unearthed new gems from her musical vault, packing just as much punch as the mid 80's hits that launched her career. Let "Soldier Of Love" take you captive today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Shinedown ... Back to Top



Shinedown
The Sound Of Madness
Atlantic Records

### ROCK Reviewed 01-19-10 Shinedown The Sound Of Madness

It isn't often that an album explodes in popularity over a year after it's release, but Shinedown is taking that theory and tossing it out the window. "The Sound of Madness" has two of the biggest hits on rock radio at the moment, and there just might be more to come.

"If You Only Knew" and "Second Chance" are two of the best rock ballads of the last decade, and both are featured on the album. Picking up on the success of bands such as ickelback and Hinder, Shinedown pack pure emotion and heart wrenching lyrics into each note of their songs. Even in the video format, the band is head and shoulders above their Competition in putting out material that fans young and old can relate to. As a live act, I can imagine they leave their fans breathless and ready for more

One track that has yet to hit VH1 is "Breaking Inside", a mammoth rock ballad tailor made for newly single people dealing with trying to make a better future for themselves. "I don't wanna live to waste another day underneath the shadow of mistakes I made." The song should be required listening for anyone convinced that their past mistakes should dictate how they live their lives.

There is nothing more American than rock music. It has a way of cutting through the fabricated mess that dominates the airwaves and taking fans back to the days where real guitars and real lyrics were easy to find on the radio. I'd like to think that those days are ahead of us with bands like Shinedown. At the very least, this band will be leading the charge.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Spoon ... Back to Top



Spoon

ROCK Reviewed 02-09-10 Spoon

### *Transference*

There are always great albums that come out of college radio and get their shot to make it big. Some do really well, and others tend to fade away. One of the surefire hitmakers of the next decade, allow me to introduce you to Spoon.

This Austin born group fronted by Britt Daniel is sure to have you up in your seats from early on. The band make the most of their space on the album, showing off some prime talent on drums by Jim Eno.

I thought the album was full of potential hits, never a dull moment. I'll be looking for further releases from Spoon as they come down the line. The type of albums that

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Transference

Merge Records

make college more bearable, to say the least.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Suzanne Vega ... Back to Top



Suzanne Vega Close Up, Vol. 1 Love Songs

**Amanuensis Productions** 

POP Reviewed 02-18-10
Suzanne Vega 

Close Up, Vol. 1 Love Songs

American pop music had a boom in the mid 80's with acts like Edie Brickell and Suzanne Vega. Brilliantly crafted lyrical pieces with flawless instrumental work were abundant on the radio, and it seemed like that type of music might last forever. Unfortunately, all too often in modern music, songwriting has taken a back seat to quickly produced commercial tunes from all genres. It's good to see that Suzanne Vega hasn't drifted far from her roots.

"Close Up" is a Godsend for folks losing faith in music today. The tracks are a welcome change from the prepackaged sounds of many of today's most popular acts, and Vega's voice is just as powerful as it was when the world became familiar with her and her smash hit "Luka."

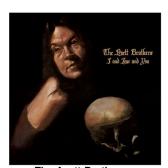
"Caramel" is my favorite song from the album. It tells a tale of a woman longing for a faraway love, finding it hard to keep her mind occupied with anything but her guy. "It won't do to dream of caramel, to think of cinnamon, and long for you." Everyone can relate to that, the feeling of trying to imagine anything but the feeling you have when you're in the arms of the one you love.

Music enjoyment shouldn't have to be difficult. A lot of times, new stuff from your old favorites can disappoint. With "Close Up", Suzanne Vega has sent a message to all her fans, both new and those who've been spinning her records for decades. Suzanne Vega is back, she's better than ever, and she has a treat for your ears, mind & soul.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



The Avett Brothers ... Back to Top



The Avett Brothers I And Love And You

American

# ROCK Reviewed 01-27-10 The Avett Brothers I And Love And You

Rock with soul is always timeless, and the latest album from The Avett Brothers is a prime example of that; a collection of tracks worthy of a rise up the charts and a place in any music fan's collection.

The North Carolina bred Avett Brothers are a force to be reckoned with in the new Southern rock world. They can produce well written songs and have musical skills worth taking notice of. I have a good feeling that with the right break, The Avett Brothers could be headlining a nationwide tour to packed seats in a short period of time.

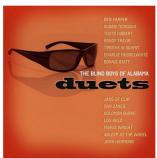
The song that may well get them there is the album's title track. It shares the feeling of a man trying to remember what he may have forgotten, how he could do things a little better. "When at first I learned to speak, I used all my words to fight...three words that became hard to say: I and love and you."

On songwriting abilitites alone, The Avett Brothers are stars in the making. They put together a collection of tales sure to stand the test of time. I anticipate big things for this band for many years to come. Let "I And Love And You" grace your home or IPod in the near future.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



The Blind Boys of Alabama ... Back to Top



The Blind Boys of Alabama Duets

Saguaro Road Records

#### GOSPEL Reviewed 01-12-10

### The Blind Boys of Alabama Duets

There are few acts whose sound has been enjoyed for two generations. Those that have been fortunate to make music that long always seem to have a lot of friends. I find it hard to imagine a group of artists with more friends than The Blind Boys of Alabama, and there are many reasons why.

The gospel genre has many variations, and the Blind Boys of Alabama put a well-needed twist on the music, mixing blues, soul and empowering lyrics into their own unique sound, and the cast of players who joined them on "Duets" is just as diverse as the music itself. Ben Harper, Bonnie Raitt, Randy Travis and Lou Reed are just a sampling of the artists who lent their talents to the project, a masterpiece from beginning to end.

"When the Spell Is Broken", featuring Bonnie Raitt, is a pure gem. Hearing her sing and play on this heaven-sent Classic was the highlight of the album for me. There are at least six tracks on this recording which could easily place in the gospel charts in coming months.

The world could use a little saving these days, and music just might be a small part of that. When folks can come home from a hard day's work, throw on an album, and recharge the batteries through heartwarming songs of faith, it is a very good thing. Share The Blind Boys of Alabama with your friends and family today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



The National ... Back to Top



The National The Virginia EP Beggars Banquet

## ALTERNATIVE Reviewed 01-27-10 The National The Virginia EP

Matt Berninger of The National has an incredibly rare voice. Upon hearing "The Virginia EP", I was really struggling to remember hearing a lyricisit even vaguely similiar to his. It isn't often that an album comes around to remind us of the fact that some of the most powerful sounds can come from the least likely of places. The National has done that and so much more.

With a sound born in Brooklyn, The National have taken their place among alternative music's elite. Making use of clear brilliance in songwriting, the band share their gifts with the audience, well aware that little, if any, music around sounds anything like them. It can be a powerful thing to carve out a niche in the industry. I'm just hoping to be around when the band comes back for seconds.

Of all the songs on this well-produced album, I'll pick "Without Permission" as the best. Berninger's powerfully soulful voice and the band's superb instrumental work make it a bona fide chart topper on the college radio charts.

Independent music has seen it's ups and downs in recent years. There is a school of thought that once an independent artist or act gains widespread popularity, that they lose some of their relevance to their longtime fans. As far as The National goes, their die hard fans needn't worry. They are authentic enough to stay grounded, and just might be good enough to become big stars. Keep your eyes open for coming releases from The National at your local independent music store.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



Thomas Lorenzo Quartet ... Back to Top



**JAZZ** Reviewed 02-03-10

### Thomas Lorenzo Quartet Spanish Breeze

The soothing sounds of Barcelona are on display in the latest release from the Thomas Lorenzo Quartet. "Spanish Breeze" is likely to sweep you across the ocean in no particular hurry to come back home.



Thomas Lorenzo Quartet Spanish Breeze

Barcelona Music

Featuring four of the world's most reknowned Spanish jazz stars, "Spanish Breeze" is a soul stirring journey back in time, to a place where music healed the sick and made them dance. Any wedding with a global theme would do well to include this album's classic tracks on the dance card.

It is hard to single out one song as the best on this album, but "Blue Secrets" stands out for me. It reminds me of the music playing in the background of some of the finest romantic films of all time. The album could be the perfect gift for savvy Valentines' day shoppers worldwide.

There is nothing wrong with taking the one you love to the floor for a tender slow dance. The Thomas Lorenzo quartet could very well provide the musical backdrop for your next romantic interlude with that special Someone. Let "Spanish breeze" put a twinkle in the eye of your loved one tonight.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Toni Braxton ... Back to Top



Toni Braxton Pulse

Atlantic Records

## R+B Reviewed 02-09-10 Toni Braxton Pulse

Toni Braxton has long had the gift to make people feel good with her voice. It also doesn't hurt that she knows absence makes the heart grow fonder. Toni would like to make her grand return with "Pulse."

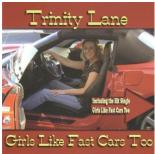
A throwback to the glory days of "Breath Again", "Pulse" is a hands down winner. Ms. Braxton has a singing range second to none, and she shares her gifts from one track to the next. Not too many have taken the road less traveled, but those that do have quite a story to tell. Ms. Braxton has easily taken her place among the top storytellers of her genre, capturing the listener's ear quickly with stories they can relate to.

There is always room on the charts for beautiful voices singing great lyrics. I look forward to watching Toni Braxton's next ride to the top from the hits coming out of "Pulse."

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Trinity Lane ... Back to Top



Trinity Lane Girls Like Fast Cars Too

KMA Records

## COUNTRY Reviewed 02-03-10 Trinity Lane Girls Like Fast Cars Too

With shades of Mindy McCready's "Guys Do It All The Time", Trinity Lane's "Girls Like Fast Cars Too" is the latest hit from the folks at KMA Records. A sassy blend of smooth country songs with just a touch of attitude, Trinity Lane just might be the next big star in the country world.

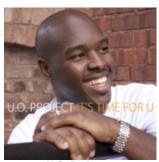
Telling tales of life and love, Lane transcends her genre into the art of classic American storytelling, sharing experiences folks can relate to, whether they are young or just young at heart. It's hard to believe that the millions of hard working housewives in this country won't get their day's work done a little quicker with Trinity Lane setting the beat.

There ain't nothing wrong with some good old fashioned feel good music, and Trinity Lane's latest has that in spades. It doesn't have clues to fix the Middle East crisis or solve the hardest question on your physics test, but this record is chock full of the type of music to make you swing a little more while caring a little less. Let Trinity Lane take your imagination for a spin today.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### U.O. Project ... Back to Top



U.O. Project
It's Time For U

BSOBold Entertainment

### BLUES Reviewed 01-06-10 U.O. Project It's Time For U

The blues have evolved from the early days. Modern blues has become a melting pot of sounds and styles, ebbs and flows, and the results have been hit and miss. With "It's Time For U", U.O. Project has hit one out of the park.

I don't remember the last time I was so pleased with a blues album. Each of the seven tracks on "It's Time For U" tells a story worth listening to, involving the audience in the ride the artist took in creating it. The care and time U.O. Project put into the album is evident in the rhythm and sound of the songs, without a weak cut throughout.

"Stop This Train" is my choice for top song. Featuring the beautiful voice of Alicia Olatuja, and written by John Mayer, the track is a masterpiece, and is ready for an immediate bullet train to the top of the blues singles charts.

I can honestly say "It's Time For U" is worth it's weight in gold. Send a copy of this album to a loved one today. There is no better gift than art, and U.O. Project has created just that.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Various Artists ... Back to Top



Various Artists
New Moon (Twilight Saga) soundtrack
Chop Shop/Atlantic

## POP Reviewed 02-09-10 Various Artists New Moon (Twilight Saga) soundtrack

As film franchises go, the "Twilight" saga is off to a good start. The music released from both films has been great, and that is likely a main reason for the film's success. The blend of classical and other style of music, tell a story right along with the pictures on screen.

It is always good to see a project showcasing classical music getting popular with school aged kids. The school music programs we took for granted have been reduced or eliminated altogether. It is projects like the Twilight series that will give kids different directions to go in, regardless of their musical taste.

Overall, I would put this in the top 20 film soundtracks of all time. I think it definitely stands up with the best of the last decade. Great music, regardless of style, makes a film memorable, If you have yet to see and hear the Twilight albums and films, give them a spin.

Christopher Llewellyn Adams



#### Various-Artists ... Back to Top



Various-Artists
Valentine's Day soundtrack

WaterTower Music, Big Machine Records

### SOUL/ R&B Reviewed 02-09-10 Various-Artists ✓ Valentine's Day soundtrack

Just when you thought you could safely give up hope for the perfect Valentine's Day gift, the myth is hattered! You can not lose with the "Valentine's Day" soundtrack. It is the season's must have.

Any recording that can list Joss Stone, Nat King Cole, and Taylor Swift sets the bar incredibly high. The entire album is a gem, without a skip over dud track in the bunch.

Valentine's Day can mean different things to different folks. I ca't imagine anyone who wouldn't enjoy at least three songs on this album. Really, it's a collection, in one way or another, that will mean something for everyone, no matter how old they ARE.

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