

GENREKIDE

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SO LONG, FAREWELL, GOODBYE (AND ALL THAT JAZZ...)

It was just going to be an enormous number of short reviews to end off the year as there has been a whole bunch of records coming out in the past while. But I couldn't do it. Two of those records deserved slightly more extensive coverage, simply because they are among the best I have heard in ages. Namely *Elastica* and *Nectarine No. 9*.

I finally get to do my full-blown gush about *Elastica* at long last this week, and I am very happy about that. It feels like geological ages have passed since the hype about this bunch first started in the UK music press. And the most amazing thing is that they have managed to conserve the level of energy that they had in the early days and put out a debut album that is quite spectacular (except maybe for the rather boring title of *Elastica*). They have become quite notorious for their delicious plagiarism, one case with *Wire* has already been settled out of court, and they make no attempt to disguise it either. And why hide it anyway - is there anything wrong with wearing your influences on your sleeve? They have the good sense to steal from the very rich in ideas such as the aforementioned *Wire*, the *Stranglers*, and numerous other new wave bands. New wave? Yup, I'm afraid that they are new wave, and none of that new-wave-of-new-wave rubbish either. The songs all get to the point very quickly - verse, chorus and that's about it. Nothing unnecessary at all. And one thing that I like an awful lot is that no song fades out - they all just come to an end when they have said all they have to. Only 'Never Here' (their epic) clocks in at over four, and it does stand out as a highlight but not because the other songs don't have time to develop their ideas fully. Instead, it's just because it's a damned good song. They are all damned good songs. And after sixteen of them, in a succinct forty minutes, it's all over. A hell of a ride though. A magnificent debut, and for once you can believe the hype.

Another record that dearly deserves your attention is *Niagara Falls* by Scotland's *Nectarine No. 9*. They are a band that I have been following closely over the past eighteen months as the founding member, Davey Henderson, is one of Scotland's most

entertaining songwriters. Their four releases so far have all been on the legendary Postcard Recordings Of Scotland, and so it has been an import only scenario so far. But worry no more as Quebec's Shake The Record Label have just licensed this compilation so that *Nectarine No. 9* can



finally reach a wider audience. If you have been reading my column over the past while, you will probably have a good idea of what they sound like. If you have forgotten (or are a newcomer...) I shall refresh your memory. Mr. Henderson writes pop songs. But not normal pop songs; he never has. Instead he writes pop songs with ragged edges that grate and grab at your psyche until they have gotten right into your head. They get under your skin by the most direct route - by tearing at your flesh and entering through your open wounds while you are trying to nurse them. Both fuzzy, distorted guitars and pure angelic guitars form the backdrop to the whole thing, and also the occasional sample and keyboard. That makes it sound a little on the violent side - it's not. It's all very subtle; his songs are almost gentle and some could be mistaken as tender if you were not paying attention. Subliminal and sublime. Completely unique and utterly indispensable. (*Shake The Record Label*, 598 Victoria, C.P. 36587, St-Lambert, Quebec, J4P 3S8)

And as for the rest? Well, I thought I should take a leaf out of *Elastica*'s book and get straight to the point, and cut through the usual bullshit. So here to both enlighten and entertain you is a quick guide to some of the latest releases...
P.J. Harvey - *To Bring You My Love*: Imagine,

if you can, that Nick Cave and Diamanda Galas had a child. And that child, Polly, has just released her best album to date full of dark, disturbing songs that both enthrall and frighten. You must own this album which will be in the top five for 1995, make no mistake. Various Artists - *Sloubrev/Percolator*: Rather insipid pair of compilations from Nettwerk that rely too heavily on well-known names instead of decent songs. Lots of old stuff, and the new remixes suck. Morrissey - *World Of Morrissey*: A compilation of recent tracks. Not as good as *The Smiths*.



Various Artists - *Muriel's Wedding*: The Australian obsession with Abba continues on this film soundtrack a la *Priscilla*, *Queen Of The Desert*. Wonderfully cheesy, and a surprising amount of fun.

The Rankin Family - *Grey Dusk Of Eve*: A new EP which isn't as bad as expected. The presence of some members of *The Hothouse Flowers* on the title track helps to reduce the normal level of Rankin squeakiness. Smudge - *Hot Smoke And Sassafras*: Eight more songs from the Australian link to the *Lemonheads*. Unfortunately its not as tuneful as that, but still some decent songs. Well, two at least.

Ciccone Youth - *The Whitey Album*: Sonic Youth in their Madonna-worshipping days. Three fun cover versions, the highlight of which is a funky version of 'Into The Groove'. Lots of unnecessary noise too, but that's typical for the Sonics.

Gene - *Gene*: Very originally titled EP of early singles from another next big thing from UK. A dead ringer for the *Smiths* in most places, which is hardly a bad thing. I really look

forward to the album. The Tea Party - *The Edges Of Twilight*: More from the band that seems to want so bad to be *Led Zeppelin* fronted by Jim Morrison. Very predictable and sounds just like the last one. Sad.

Traci Lords - *1000 Fires*: First album from a woman best known for her previous work in the film industry (ahem). Your normal run-of-the-mill dance music (aided by members of *Jesus Jones* and the *Thompson Twins*) plus a disturbing autobiographical track. Not as bad as I thought it would be.

Various Artists - *Word Up*: Collection of spoken word pieces from series featured on *Much Music*. Some work, some don't. A chore to listen to in one sitting though. The Who - *Live At Leeds*: Simply one of the best live albums ever released, and now it has eight more songs added. Loud and raw, it will hopefully give *The Who* their rightful place in rock history. Recommended.



Radiohead - *The Bends*: This band will no longer be known as the one that did that Creep song. A quite incredible album that sounds an awful lot like *U2* in places, but yet a lot more engaging. One of the year's best, and simply essential.

Fun ^ da ^ mental - *Seize The Time*: Very political agit-pop that claims to contain the truth. It does too, documenting racial inequalities in the UK from the viewpoint of the persecuted. Rap with a new perspective. Gavin Bryars - *The Sinking Of The Titanic*: Concept piece from one of the more interesting people working in music today. Very classical sounding with its strings and boys' choir - as soothing as such a mournful piece can be. *Underworld - Dubnobasswithmyheadman*:

Quite simply the best dance album to come out in the past twelve months, although it seems unfair to call it that. Eerie songs that weave their way into your brain, becoming part of you. Search high and low for this one. Chris Connelly - *Shipwreck*: Shock!! Member of *Revolting Cocks* releases thoughtful album!! Almost reminiscent of *David Sylvain* or *David Bowie* in places, this is a delightful record that will probably sink without a trace. Sigh.

Love Battery - *Straight Freak Ticket*: Remarkably good album for a Seattle band. Two nice guitars that twist around each other, and vocal harmonies that will take you back to the late sixties. Except a bit louder. Its like grunge never happened.

Catherine - *Sorry*: This is quite simply some fine indie pop - fuzzy guitars, and vocals high up in the mix. Bonus points for the *Bee Gees* cover, but points off for a twelve minute song.

Royal Trux - *Thank You*: Indie stalwarts nearly lose their credibility for signing with a major label. They move much closer to the *Rolling Stones* this time, and very nearly blow it. The jury is still out.

The Beautiful South - *Carry On Up The Pop Charts*: Collection of wonderful, witty pop songs by a band that never seem to have had



any fame outside the UK (just like their predecessors, the *Housemartins*). The perfect place to find out just what you have been missing out on.

Die Cheertleader - *Son Of Filth*: What you would expect from a band both recommended and produced by Henry Rollins - loud guitars and powerful female vocals with lyrics that seem to make sense. A good judgement call by Hank.

Red House Painters - *Ocean Beach*: San Francisco's most miserable band are back, and they are just a bit cheerier this time round. Beautiful music, sparse arrangements, heartfelt lyrics and even some short songs. Mark Kozalek's songwriting goes from strength to strength. This could almost be their pop album if it wasn't for the epic 'Drop'. Nevertheless, well worth your attention.

Echobelly - *Insomniac*: I never did get the album, but this EP will do nicely in the meantime. Wonderful indie pop that almost sounds like *The Smiths* fronted by *Debbie Harry*. And an added bonus of two BBC session tracks that are better than the album versions. Bliss.

Jason & The Scorchers - *A Blazing Grace*: Country music with a punkish twist, and a spot of hillbilly for good measure. Throw in a couple of cover versions, the requisite ballads and you have a half decent album for the first few listens anyway.

Various Artists - *A Week Or Two In The Real World*: A very eclectic compilation on Peter Gabriel's label that features such highlights as Van Morrison singing with the *Holme Brothers*, the first new track by *Kurt Wallinger* in what seems like ages and a healthy dose of world music. A good starting point for exploring alien cultures.

Cold Water Flat - *Cold Water Flat*: The first release on the newly formed *Fort Apache* label is well worth salivating over. The music is loud, but yet the lyrics tell a different story of pain and regret. Unlike anything else out there, it's a very hypnotic, intoxicating blend and another recommended purchase.

Bootsauce - *Bootsauce*: Their fourth album is very probably their best one, but they thankfully don't forget their sense of humour. Guitars sound funkier than ever, and even the more disturbing songs have a singalong quality. Fun in its own peculiar way.

Pluto - *Failure*: A seven inch taster from their new album. It's their usual fuzzy guitar pop, backed with one of the most perfect *Beatles* impressions I have ever heard. I can't wait for the album to finally turn up.

Various Artists - *North*: It would appear that the only thing worse than seeing that terrible movie is listening to the soundtrack. I feel dirty just listening to it, excuse me while I go shower.

Grip Inc. - *Power Of Inner Strength*: These guys are probably at the pinnacle of German death metal. But when my ears bleed, I like it to be an almost pleasurable experience. Loud and boring.

Zumpano - *Look What The Rookie Did*: Zombies wannabes from Vancouver release a very nice album full of sugary melodies. So sweet it almost runs out of your speakers like molasses, but still rather endearing.

And there we have it. The end of another year. I shall bid you all a very fond farewell, and leave you with some recommendations of five albums (in addition to this week's picks) that you should all have in your music collection. I'll be round to check in a week or so...

In no particular order we have *Portishead - Dummy*; *Oasis - Definitely Maybe*; *Pulp - His N' Hers*; *Jeff Buckley - Grace* and *Velvet Crush - Teenage Symphonies To God*. Enjoy, and in the words of the great *Abba*, thank you for the music.

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