

## SOUNDBITES

**Metallica**  
*Metallica*

What do you do when you're the biggest thrash band in the world, a group whose last release sold more than 2 million copies? Raise the stakes of course. That's just what Metallica has done with their self-titled fifth album, a remarkably varied release that promises to break new ground above and beyond the realm of speed metal.

The trademark Metallica sound is still evident, but a newfound interest in variety and textures allows for stylistic departures like harmony vocals in "The Unforgiven," and a Leonard Bernstein quote during the thrash-waltz "Don't Tread On Me." Far from a sellout, *Metallica* is instead a mature work from a band poised to have their greatest success on their own terms. ■ Richard Challen, *The Tiger*, Clemson U.

**Morrissey**  
*Kill Uncle*

Former Smiths lead singer Stephen Morrissey (yes, he has a first name, but he'll deny it) has never been known for his lightweight pop sensibilities. With The Smiths, and now solo, Morrissey has carved out a niche as the poet laureate of angst.

That status is threatened by his third release, *Kill Uncle*. There is enough angst in this album to drive the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to drink, but it is clumsily realized and more reminiscent of the whining self-pity of a pop star than of the tortured wail of an artist.

The musical quality of Morrissey's solo work has always been a notch below that of the Smiths, but never so much as it is here, lapsing into one pop cliché after another.

From most artists, an album of the caliber of *Kill Uncle* would be a forgivable, easily shrugged-off bit of fluff. But we have a right to expect more from Morrissey. ■ Andy Walton, *Emory Wheel*, Emory U.

**Ned's Atomic Dust Bin**  
*God Fodder*

Explosively delivered anger, wit and sarcasm drive *God Fodder*, the debut release from Ned's Atomic Dust Bin, a young British band who chose their name from an old BBC comedy series.

"Atomic" is clearly the operative word in their name, as the album is purely 45 minutes of continuous rapid-fire eruptions of sound and voice, and dust never even gets a chance to settle before it plays through.

The rhythmic song "Happy" is easily the album's best, with the acidic lyrics, "Cause I will talk, maybe you will listen, but you won't hear a single word I say."

They're here to do their own kind of music and nothing else. Enthusiasm and energy of this sort are common to young bands (the oldest member of Ned's is 22), but to channel those traits into a coherent and solid debut album, as these guys do, is quite an accomplishment. ■ Eric Adams, *The Diamondback*, U. of Maryland



# Crowded House



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## Don't dream they're over

By ROBERT REID  
*Oklahoma Daily*, U. of Oklahoma

Australia's Crowded House never had to stumble for success.

Their 1986 debut album, *Crowded House*, sold more than a million copies and produced a No. 2 single in the United States with its first release, "Don't Dream It's Over."

Other singles "Something So Strong" and "Better Be Home Soon" (the latter from the band's second gold-selling album, *The Temple of Low Men*) showed that the songwriter/guitarist Neil Finn could adjust to the pop world cleanly from the intelligent new wave he created with the Split Enz.

It's been three years since we last had the pleasure of a Crowded House record but their "rest" is over, and the new release, *Woodface*, is well worth the wait. The album shows a new direction and a new member, Neil's brother Tim (also from the Split Enz).

But probably the most colorful of Australia's pop marvels comes from neither of the Finn brothers but from Paul Hester, the man tapping away at his drums while dancing and singing in videos. He's wacky, crazy and funny, not to mention a little clumsy.

"Hello? This is Paul Hester."

"Hello. I'm..."

Click.

"Hello? Hello?"

Not exactly the picturesque introduction to the drummer of what

some say is the world's perfect pop band. But I guess it wouldn't be Australian any other way.

"The Australian male isn't particularly a bright species," Hester explained after we were reconnected. "But very friendly, friendly and dumb! They walk into lamp posts, and it doesn't hurt them. They just have a bit of a chuckle."

After we had a bit of a chuckle about his phone troubles, Hester got (early) serious about the band and its newest member, Tim.

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— Paul Hester,  
Crowded House drummer

was the end of Curly, Larry and Moe ... and the beginning of Shemp," Hester said. "But the advantages of Tim are obvious. He's got a great voice and a strong personality."

The newly formed four-piece band began recording the songs in Tim's home studio before taking them to Los Angeles to be finished with producer Mitchell Froom.

The marvelous results are obvious with the first single, "Chocolate Cake." Sporting a psychedelic-funk feel to go along with a comment on American

materialism, it is an indication of *Woodface* as a whole.

"It's obviously a lot broader," Hester said. "There's more in it than other Crowded House records, with the extremes going from "Chocolate Cake" through to a song like "All I Ask" (with a 24-piece orchestra). It sounds like a weird *Twin Peaks* soundtrack or something. Tony Bennett maybe."

Equally good are the tracks "It's Only Natural" and "Weather With You," which produce a settling charm in comparison. Aside from particularly good guitar parts, they show what Hester calls "a new instrument," Tim's harmonious vocals.

As Crowded House tours North America for the third time, Hester is optimistic about the band's future and has one seemingly simple goal.

"We want to be able to do what we want to do, when we want to do it," he said. "We want to be spoiled children like everyone else. We want to have our own audience and maintain it."

"We love going around the world and playing to everyone ... and then going home to Australia to live."

Yes, Australia, one of "the world's best secrets," as Hester said. The place where men stumble into street lights and then walk away giggling. But that isn't our dear Hester, is it?

"I used to do that. But I've learned. I've become slightly cultured now. I'm a bit of a pomp."