

Spring brings deluge of excellent new releases

So many new albums coming out, so little time, so little money. This past winter was a bit of a dry spell in terms of new music, but every time the pickings get slim, one can rest assured that good stuff is on its way.

This time around is no different, as a veritable avalanche of excellent listening material is coming out. The sheer amount of things to buy have put me into a bit of shock, and I'm seriously considering donating some plasma in order to purchase it all.

This week sees the release of the new album by the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, "Plastic Fang." The first collection of new material from JSBX since 1998's "Acme" is a blistering return to rock 'n' roll after a couple albums worth of experimentation with electronics and hip-hop beats. I'm listening to "Plastic Fang" right now, and I'm afraid that the computer's speakers are going to break apart from the sheer amount of rock.

An old yet reliable veteran of the music biz, Neil Young, also released an album this week. "Are You Passionate?" marks yet another stylistic U-turn from the mercurial Young, as the CD sounds like an old Stax/Volt soul record, albeit a record with jagged electric guitar solos and a wobbly, frail lead singer.

Nearly every song on "Are You Passionate?" is top-notch, with the notable exception of "Let's

Roll," a song detailing the actions of the heroic Sept. 11 passengers of Flight 93. "Let's Roll" is up there with Paul McCartney's God-awful "Freedom," vying for the top prize in the first annual "Please Don't Write Songs About

Sept. 11" contest. "Let's Roll" aside, however, "Are You Passionate?" is a pretty terrific little album.

Next week, aggressive listeners will enjoy the release of "Attak," which is the new album by grumpy German industrial mavens KMFDM. Now, KMFDM made a big deal a couple years ago about the fact that they were breaking up and even released an album called "Adios."

I have no idea what that whole situation was about, but I managed to get my hands on a copy of "Attak" last month, and let me tell you — it's awesome. KMFDM is back with a vengeance, creating sheets of unpleasant noise like "Attak/Reload" and "Urban Monkey Warfare." In fact, "Attak" is way, way better than "Adios," and it's a worthy addition to the KMFDM canon. Here's

hoping that the guys don't break up again anytime soon.

And in two weeks, even more good stuff will be hitting the shelves. Most people probably haven't heard of Alfie, but they should really check it out. Alfie is one of those bands to which the "Radiohead-ish" cliché would apply, but they are really much better than that.

Their last album, "If You Happy With You Need Do Nothing" was a muted, gorgeous affair, with little acoustic ditties backed with atmospheric walls of keyboards and other such gizmos. Their new album is called "World in Your Ear," and if it's half as good as their last then it will be worth owning, for sure.

Most folks probably know Cornershop as being the band responsible for "Brimful of Asha," which happened to be a great song the first five or so times that one heard it, but unfortunately it was played into the ground. I know people who still exhibit seizure-like symptoms whenever "Brimful of Asha" comes on the radio.

This is unfortunate, because Cornershop is in fact a really good band that has solid albums. Their latest release is called "Handcream for a Generation," and from what I've heard, it's a hard-rocking, hip-hopping cornucopia of styles. Which is no surprise, really, considering that one could describe all of their past releases in a similar manner.



Dave Depper
In Stereo

Pulse brief

Book signing focuses on relationship problems

Divorce and separation have become common methods for couples to deal with relationship problems. But a new self-help book may give couples another tool to help keep their relationship healthy.

Authors Cristi and Tony Cubito will participate in a book signing

for their recently released self-help guide, "Couple's Journey," at 7 p.m. today at the University Bookstore.

Cristi Cubito said this book addresses common problems that arise for couples. She said one of the most common problems stems from poor communication between couples.

"When couples try to work through issues and are not communicating as well as they should be, they are distancing themselves," she said. She said a fear of being

hurt causes people to distance themselves from their partner.

The book operates as not only a self-help guide, but it also contains a journal for couples to record their progress using the Cubitos' techniques.

Cristi Cubito said the book applies to everyone — even single people.

"Everybody's in a relationship" of some kind, she said. "We're here to learn and grow with one another."

— Jen West

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