

Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out Eating Out

REVIEWS



WHAT DOES GOOD LUCK BRING?
No. 2 • In Music We Trust

That the gay one would be the least complex, most meat-and-potatoes sort in any group defies the conventional stereotypes, but that's what we have in the case of Neil Gust. He began his career as a guitarist, singer and songwriter in the long-defunct Portland rock institution Heatmiser (from which the famed Sam Coomes, now of Quasi, and Elliott Smith also graduated). Gust's group, No. 2, is happy to be a more or less straight-up (no irony intended) rock band; compared to the elaborately clever Coomes and the sometimes solipsistic Smith, they might as well be AC/DC.

No. 2's debut, *What Does Good Luck Bring?*, is worth at least one listen, but while opener "A Little Confusion" is only saved from too-familiarity by (sexually?) anarchic lyrics "I don't mind a little confusion/I kind of like a little pain" and "More, More" just proves that syncopated hand claps make any song riveting, Gust has a few extraordinary tricks up his sleeve elsewhere. The catchy, country-flavored "8:45 a.m." boasts "I don't wanna go to work" as its only lyric; "Traveling" and "Stranger's March" have pure, sad, addictive guitar melodies scrawled copiously in their margins; and on the excellent title track, a down-beat waltz-time ballad, Gust turns his keening falsetto into the sound of the other shoe dropping.

What the band does is play very good power-pop, and though a number of very good power-pop bands are out there, the album offers enough melodic and lyrical interest to deserve a place in any pop fan's collection. It's at least as singular a rush to listen to as your Weezers or your Veruca Salts.

—Christopher McQuain



CHOCKECHERRY
Ashleigh Flynn • Self-released

For the past couple of years Portland pop-folkie Ashleigh Flynn has earned a steady spot opening for a long line of Aladdin Theater-type alt-country singer-songwriters (Wilco, Jonatha Brooke, Nanci Griffith). With three years between her first album and the new release *Chokecherry* to refine and complement her live sound (most recently she's been enlisting DJs and eclectic rockers to back her up), she's an artist aiming for a new sonic target.

Assisting producers Gregg Williams (Dandy Warhols) and Nancy Hess (Carmina Piranha) have wrapped a mix of audiophile indulgences around the queer artist's spare percussive acoustic stylings. Drum samples, ambient keyboards, distorted guitar, the occasional record scratch—all create a landscape more varied and complex than her debut effort.

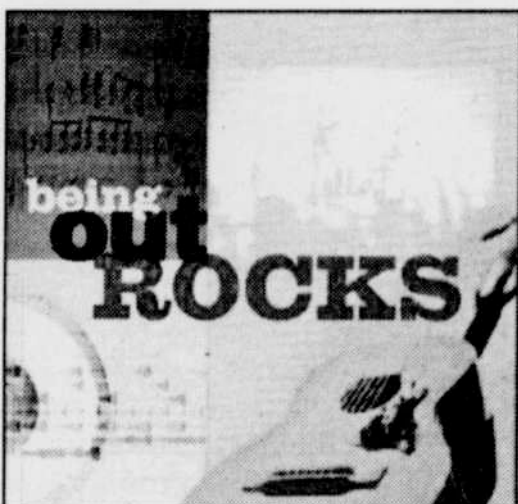
Flynn seems to have cracked the code of promoting herself locally—her name is out there, and that's half the battle. But not only does *Chokecherry* often sound like she's inhabiting another singer's world, there's also a distance in her work that feels like a safe, well-worn posture.

It's not that Flynn isn't talented; she is. But *Chokecherry* sounds like a knockoff, and the production shenanigans feel overt and contrived.

The young musician is missing an opportunity; she's got eyes and ears on her, but she comes off like another card-carrying member of the worn-out Union of Imitators (sounds like: Sarah McLachlan, Tori Amos, Ani DiFranco). And that doesn't serve anyone—not the listener, not the artist.

So while Ashleigh Flynn is stacked with talent and possibility, can she rise above the homogeneity and deliver something we can be a part of?

—Cori Taratoot



BEING OUT ROCKS
Various Artists • Human Rights Campaign/
Centaur Entertainment

Compilation CDs are a mixed bag. On one hand, they're an excellent way to check out a bunch of different artists all at once, some of which you may like, some of which you'll be compelled to get to know better. Also, many compilations are used to benefit good causes.

However, what happens after you've checked out the artists, after all the money has gone to a good cause? Is there really such a thing as a comp you listen to again and again? My friends, there is a graveyard for CDs of this sort: It is known as the \$1 bin at used-record stores.

That said, *Being Out Rocks* isn't so bad. It benefits the National Coming Out Project of the Human Rights Campaign. It features some big names and covers a lot of genres—pop, folk, rock, dancehall. Highlights include Sarah McLachlan's soaring piano ballad "Angel," Queen's all-too-presently-relevant "Is This the World We Created?" and Janis Ian's haunting folk tune "Society's Child."

Not surprisingly, most of the songs are either about relationships or queer politics. All in all, it's a decent collection.

So help out HRC by buying this record. Give it a few hearty listens. Then, before it starts collecting dust, before it makes its slow journey to a box in your basement (next to your laserdiscs, your pogs), do yourself a favor. Drop it off at your local used-record store's \$1 bin. Comp CDs need community, too.

—Katy Davidson



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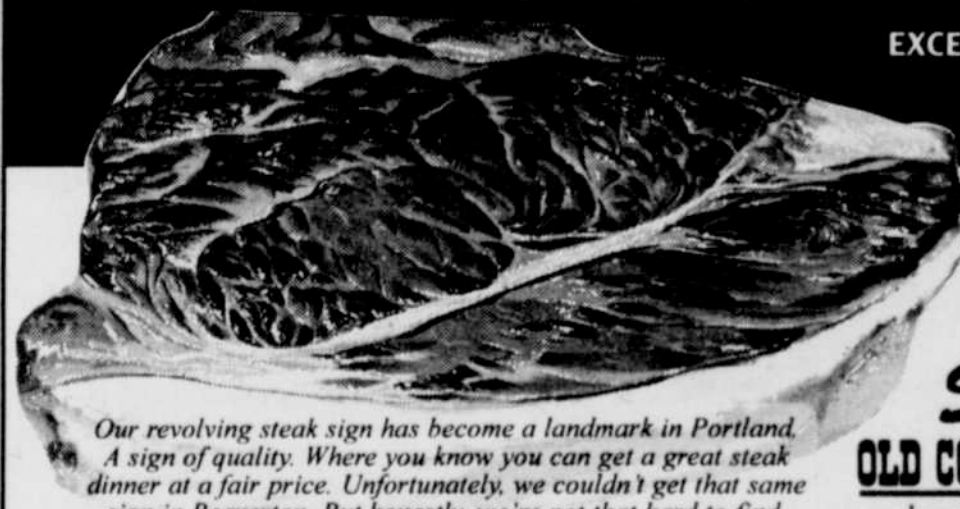


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