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plugged in CD REVIEWS BY LOCAL WRITERS

Jonatha Brooke, *Back in the Circus*, BAD DOG RECORDS 2004, By Cameron J. Yee

Those finding themselves newly single after an extended relationship will understand the metaphor behind Jonatha Brooke's new album, *Back in the Circus*. While finding love, losing it and struggling through grief are not new subjects, Brooke, like other good songwriters, finds a way to make the well-worn topics resonant and relevant. Who hasn't begrudgingly entered the dating scene ("Back in the Circus"), been fearful of taking risks ("Better After All") or gotten caught up in the past ("It Matters Now")? Mind you, these are not songs to wallow to, but ones to elicit reflection and self-examination, and ultimately, a bit of strength. In this latest effort, Brooke also draws on notable artists James Taylor ("Fire and Rain"), Brian Wilson ("God Only Knows") and Alan Parsons ("Eye in the Sky") to round out her song cycle. Brave decisions, especially with Taylor's quintessential piece, but bravery is just one of many great things to expect from Brooke. Pick up your copy of *Back in the Circus* today, and give your support to this talented (and wholly independent!) singer-songwriter.

Mars Volta, *De-Loused In The Comatorium*, UNIVERSAL RECORDS 2003, By Aaron Maltz

De-Loused In The Comatorium, the first full-length album from bellwethers Mars Volta, sparks a growing debate concerning the future of mainstream rock. Lyrically, it is a conceptual album following the struggle between life and death fought by one man within the confines of a hospital bed. Musically, it swerves like a drunk driver through a nimitz of musical genres, presenting chaotic and technical prog-rock spliced with hauntingly ambient passages battling a veritable blend of Santana-like rhythms and acoustic interludes. Historically, this combination propels a band solely into "cult" status. Instead, Mars Volta has nicked the windshield of the music industry with a video for "Televators" and substantial media coverage. The ostensible question then becomes this: Why now does an unconventional prog-rock band in 2004 capture the attention of the music world? From the moving passages of "Son Et Lumiere/Inertiac Esp," the sonic insanity of "Drunkship of Lanterns" and the epic conclusion, "Take the Veil Cerpin Taxt," *De-Loused In The Comatorium* reveals an authenticity that cannot be refuted. It is highly unconventional, exceptionally jarring and undeniably catchy, achieving a desperately needed honesty that music fans have responded to positively in an industry desiccated of creativity.



The Pixies, *Doolittle*, ELECTRA RECORDS 1989, By Kris Bluth

8:58 Saturday morning – You're standing in line at the McDonald Theatre with your fellow hipsters. Granted, you're the only hipster wearing an Old Navy shirt, but that's OK. Just keep your coat zipped up. 9 am – The line briefly lurches forward, then comes back to a halt. 9:02 am – Maybe you should've gone online or gone to Safeway. No, stay independent; Keep it local. 9:08 am – The call goes out: No more tickets to be sold at the box office. The scalpers are getting ready to post on eBay and, apparently, the McDonald doesn't want to hurt their feelings. The crowd dissipates, but you begin walking home at a brisk speed. 9:20 am – You burst through the door, drop your coat on the floor, log on to Ticketswest.com, and there it is: One Pixies ticket, plus convenience and handling fees. You fumble for your debit card, but then you think about your wife, who spent yesterday trudging from one temp agency to another. You look up to see *Doolittle* on the CD rack and weigh your options: drink overpriced beer with a crowd of sweaty strangers or lie on the couch eating Kettle Chips in your underwear? Either way you'll still get to hear *Wave of Mutilation* on April 27.

Click the mouse. Are you sure you want to shut down this computer?

Yes. Yes, you are.

The Perverts, *Porn on the Cobb*, SELF-RELEASED OCTOBER 2003, By Ed Cole

The Perverts from Eugene are kickin' into gear with this solid release: Songs about wanting to stay home, girls gone wild and getting back to that wasted state of mind. Clean-yet-chunky guitars and a quick, solid rhythm section lend this CD an older-school punk sound – think Wire, Buzzcocks, Samoans. A very fun disc to listen to while you crack open that first beer on Friday night.

Kanye West, *The College Dropout*, ROCAFELLA RECORDS 2004, By Todd Cooper

This year's most anticipated hip hop album comes from 26-year-old producer Kanye West. West's first solo joint, *The College Dropout*, showcasing his lyrical skills, dropped early February.

West's sample-heavy, soulful beats have been blowing up the charts for the past year. The mastermind behind hits like "Izzo (H.O.V.A.)" (Jay Z), "Stand Up" (Ludacris), "You Don't Know My Name" (Alicia Keys), and "Get By" (Talib Kweli), Kanye no doubt has it as a producer. *Dropout* vouches for his instinctive gift as an emcee. He easily keeps his audience interested and entertained. Songs like "The New Workout Plan" will have you bobbing your head and cracking up at the same time. West spits witty word-play in an honest, down-home style. You can even forgive the "bullshit ice rap" on "Breathe In, Breathe Out." He does come serious on tracks like "All Falls Down" (with Syleena Johnson) and "Jesus Walks." His strong passion for music is evident in his first single, "Through the Wire," which was written and recorded while his mouth was wired shut after a nearly fatal car accident in 2002. Other stand-out tracks include "2 Words" (with Mos Def, Freeway and the Harlem Boys Choir), "Family Business" and "Slow Jam" (with Twista and Jamie Foxx). Although most of the album was leaked through the Internet months ago, *The College Dropout* surprises with some reworked versions.

