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Maritime, Adios, 2003, FOREIGN LEISURE RECORDS. By Amy McCullough

The Promise Ring and The Dismemberment Plan's breakups left an echoing "boo-hoo" throughout the indie community, but Maritime has come to dry our collective tears. Uniting Promise-Ring/Vermont members Davey VonBohlen and Dan Didier with the Dismemberment Plan's Eric Axelson, Maritime's five-song EP, *Adios*, gives listeners just enough pop-bliss to whet their palate for the full-length due out later this year.

The record starts off more in-your-face than expected with a punk drumbeat that literally "pops," and bright, blasting trumpets on the title track. You'll probably listen to the super-catchy second track, "Someone Has to Die," with typical VonBohlen lyrics, ("Our love goes crazy all the time/someone hasta hasta die"), at least five times before you even get to the acoustic, very Vermont "Down to the River."

The bouncing on "Birds of Ireland" and its repetitive chorus could easily fit on The Promise Ring's *Nothing Feels Good*, while the totally laid-back "In Your Arms" is not much more than a Lenny Kravitz rip-off (specifically, "It Ain't Over 'Till It's Over"). An outstanding debut EP, *Adios* is a great collection of pop songs, but it serves the double purpose of reuniting some dearly missed indie rock legends.

People Under the Stairs, O.S.T., 2002, OHM RECORDS. By Nick Weston

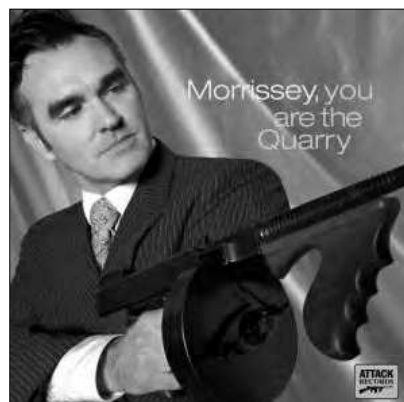
Playa haters, bling-blingers, and chicken-heads please exit the building. Real hip-hop-pers take a deep breath of fresh air, because the People Under the Stairs have come to save the day.

The PUTS' third album, *O.S.T.*, has proven to be their most noteworthy and consistent album yet. PUTS provides us with that early '90s golden hip-hop sound portrayed by groups like A Tribe Called Quest, De La Soul and The Jungle Brothers. With rhymes about hanging out in L.A., drinking with friends or searching for records at a local shop, the PUTS are definitely the antithesis of most of today's rhymes about 24-inch chrome wheels and Gucci suits.

Unlike the PUTS' past two CDs, which were heavy on the skits and only contained a few strong jams, *O.S.T.* is packed with over a dozen bangin' anthems on a CD with 20 tracks. Some of the highlight songs are "Acid Raindrops," "L.A. Song," and the really old school sounding "Hang Loose," which is sure to bring back memories of hip-hop's glory days. So for those of you who think hip-hop died in the mid-'90s, relax, because the PUTS are takin' us back in time!

Morrissey, You are the Quarry, 2004, ATTACK/SANCTUARY RECORDS. By Kris Bluth

On his first album since 1997's *Maladjusted*, Morrissey spins a tale of domestic bliss that can best be compared to John and Yoko's *Double Fantasy*.



The Sheryl Crow backing vocals on track four are brilliant, but the real high point is "Little Liam," a six-minute lullaby to Morrissey's infant son that ends with a triumphant solo by Eric Clapton. You don't believe a word I'm saying, do you?

At this point, Morrissey is like "Star Trek" or George W. Bush: You're either into him or you're not, and nothing's changing your mind. If you're a fan, you'll find plenty to enjoy: The songs are full of hooks; the production is vibrant and Morrissey's singing is the best it's ever been (Smiths included).

Granted, most of the lyrics read like they were written by a 19-year-old virgin, but complaining about Morrissey's gloomy wit is like saying that Michael Franti is too political. What else is he supposed to do? Get married?

The Gift of Gab, 4th Dimensional Rocketships Going Up, 2004, QUANTUM PROJECTS. By Jesse Dungan

Tim Parker, aka "The Gift of Gab," is best known for his role as emcee in the explosive Bay Area hip-hop group Blackalicious, composed of Gab and deejay Chief Xcel. After more than a decade of collaborating with the Chief and several other Quantum label-mates, Gab has released *4th Dimensional Rocketships Going Up*, his first solo effort.

Anyone familiar with Blackalicious' music knows that Gab uses his voice as an instrument to release explosions of energy and uplift. Gab's solo project holds true to that sentiment as his melodic raps flow smoothly over rich beats provided by producers Vitamin D and Jake One.

"Way of Light" platforms Gab's ability to provide soulful background vocals behind a relaxed flow full of intricate rhyme schemes and lyrical meditations.

"Ride On," among several other tracks, features Vursatyl, a member of Portland's own Lifesavas. Gab and Vursatyl collaborate to form soulful harmonies without shying away from using tag-team battle rhymes in their track "Real MCs."

Put The Gift of Gab over any beat and he will dominate it with his microphone presence and ability to rap. Put The Gift of Gab over consistently strong and well produced beats and you have *4th Dimensional Rocketships Going Up*, an album bound to impress Gab's old fans and create new fans alike.

