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PRODUCTIONS

plugged in CD REVIEWS BY LOCAL WRITERS

Monkee Torture, *Too Cheap for Vinyl*, 2003, Self-Released

By Robert Jacobs

Many styles are represented in this debut from Monkee Torture: From '50s rock and British metal to American punk and '60s fairytale psychedelic-metal (think Spinal Tap/Stonehedge). It's a punk/metal marriage presided over by the ominous character of the Baron Von Torture.

The strength of this record lies in the musicians, as evidenced on "Release the Hounds" and "Uncle Metallica." The band really sinks its teeth into the Baron Von Torture songs, "What Would Baron Von Torture Do" and "Christmas at Von Torture's." There is some guitar work in the finest metal tradition, and although these songs seem to bring the band focus, there is a bit too much dependency upon the character of Baron Von Torture.

Too much of a good joke can be a bad thing. Also, the vocals come across as rather one-dimensional, featuring gargled shout-outs, à la the Dropkick Murphys. This vocal technique, however, will definitely appeal to a certain type of listener.

Fans of The Misfits, The Ramones and Iron Maiden will appreciate this CD. Standout tracks are "Release the Hounds," "Teenage Dumbshit" and "WWBVTD."

Ween, *Live in Chicago CD/DVD*, 2004, Sanctuary Records

By Jeffrey Stout

From an origin of two teens and a drum machine, Ween has grown into a rock beast with fervent fans, sold out theaters and festival appearances. One of the few success stories of the '90s, Ween rose from Beavis-esque retardation to owning the most devout fans and spewing the most excellent rock. *Live in Chicago* secures its special place in rock history.

Here is a concert video so superfluous that it is necessary. With three official live albums and a liberal taping and trading policy, it's difficult to swing a net without catching a Ween bootleg. Nevertheless, the production quality alone on *Live in Chicago* is reason enough to add it to your collection.

But why care about production milk when you have the cream resting atop two nights of a Chicago, Vic Theatre three-night Weenie binge? The show begins sober and standard enough; Ween kicks out the jams. But at a third of the way in, Dean Ween steps to the mic and announces a sing-along. "It goes like this," Dean says, "one, two, three, AIDS!" From that point, welcome to Ween's world. The musicians show off their inner Gene Autry with "Chocolate Town," their Rainbow Child on "The Argus," and their horny teenager on "Touch my Tooter."

While it wouldn't make up for missing your next Ween show, *Live in Chicago* works as a between-tour supplement. It brings back concert images audio cannot, and those your mind couldn't hold while you were there.



Armored Frog, *Ghost Cow*, 2004, Sleep Sound Records

By David Snider

Since bands like Smog and Low launched the slow-core revolution in the early part of the '90s, countless others have tried to march boldly forth in the "I love depressing music" parade. Eventually you run out of ideas until a band like Armored Frog comes along.

Here emotions are scraped raw between cementing bass, whispering mystery synths, languid guitars and scraps of found sounds. Some of this could be postmodern pop, and a good deal of it is lushly instrumental minimalism. The closest thing I'd put it up against is Arab Strap (sans the beer-soaked Scottish accent).

Even with all the sorrow stitched throughout these songs, it's far from just soul-freezing desolation. It's like driving alone through Nebraska at night and realizing how much you actually love life. This is totally original and searching.

Unlike the oceans of "volume" bands that ceaselessly hit the campus airwaves, these songs require your attention and are seriously worth every last bit. After *Automated* (2002), this sophomore effort is going to hit some nerves. Bleak never felt so good.

PJ Harvey, *Uh Huh Her*, 2004, Island Records

By Stacey Fay



The slick production of *Stories From the City, Stories From the Sea* is gone and this is a welcome change. Harvey seems to have gone back to the bare basics found in older releases like *Rid of Me*.

On songs such as "Bad Mouth" and "The Darker Days of Me & Him," Harvey seems betrayed ("You were an unhappy child / That doesn't make your lying tongue alright.") She's even a little threatening in the song "Pocket Knife" ("Can you see my pocket knife? / You can't make me be your wife.") Despite some very bitter songs, Harvey doesn't lose her sense of humor, making use of hand claps in "Who the Fuck" ("Who the fuck you trying to be? / Get your dog away from me.")

Is Harvey sliding backward into a hole of hysteria? Possibly, but if she's falling, it'll be on her own terms and you believe her when she sings, "I'm not trying to cause a fuss / just wanna make my own fuck-ups. / I'm not trying to break your heart / I'm just trying not to fall apart."



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