

**The Fall, *Live At The Witch Trials***

2004 RE-RELEASE EARTHMARK RECORDS  
By Sean Campanella

In 1979, The Fall described itself as "northern white crap that talks back." *Live At The Witch Trials*, the first of The Fall's 26 albums, is a dubious and unforgettable combination of raw, roughshod punk and glitzy pop.

Yvonne Pawlett provides the primitive keyboarding and Mark Smith does the atonal snarling. The lyrics come off as schlocky and high-flown at first, but once the industrial landscape of North Manchester is filled out in all of its horror (with pollution, gangs, street drugs, creaking floorboards, "peep-hole places ... toilets and feces"), Smith's self-made heroics seem entirely reasonable and even endearing. Here are homely looking blue-collar kids in oxfords and argyle trying to break out. "Cracker Factory," belts Smith (who worked in a meat plant), "a place where you get into the working routine again/rehabs for no hopes/prefab for jobless dopes!"

The result of all this is strangely glamorous, a sort of groovy bleakness. Far from studio-perfect, *Witch Trials* is the one-of-a-kind music we all should have been making in high school, but you have to hand it to The Fall - they did it. Decades later, Smith still leads the band and a devoted following.

**Godsmack, *The Other Side***, 2004 UNIVERSAL RECORDS By Matthew T. Stone

Don't get me wrong, I like my music heavy just as any other metalhead, but I hold a special respect for those bands, and the musical artists themselves, who are just as proficient in writing and performing songs on acoustic AND electric instruments. Godsmack has released an album worthy of such respect.

Here is a group, like Led Zeppelin, who has a talent for making acoustic songs sound just as heavy as their electric counterparts. "Re-Align" and "Keep Away" show their alternate face here: intimate, yet with a still brazen energy. And "Asleep" is the soft closing track of its alter-downtuned-ego "Awake."

The opening track "Running Blind," like most other opening tracks, stands out with its emotional poignancy, revealing secrets inside ourselves the more we search outside for answers.

The band collaborates with Dropbox members Lee Richards and John Kosco for "Touche," a musical statement on the human condition, and its reflection upon the individual with the golden rule.

All in all, throughout its seven tracks, *The Other Side* is an enjoyable listen, when your gleeful demons who dance to double-time drums can simply sit in your head and sip on some nostalgic ambrosia. Cheers!

**Floater, *Acoustics***, 2004

ELEMENTAL RECORDS By Mikey Knac

The Northwest psychedelic rock trio and musical phenomenon Floater find themselves treading new ground with their most recent effort *Acoustics*. After a long string of very successful live acoustic shows throughout Oregon and Washington, the band has recorded an album consisting of original tracks all performed acoustically.

This is a major shift in tone from their previous record, *Alter*, which sported heavy hitting metal tracks with lyrics reciting intense political commentary. With *Acoustics* we find all three musicians, and most of all front man Robert Wynia experimenting more musically and lyrically than they have in any previous album.

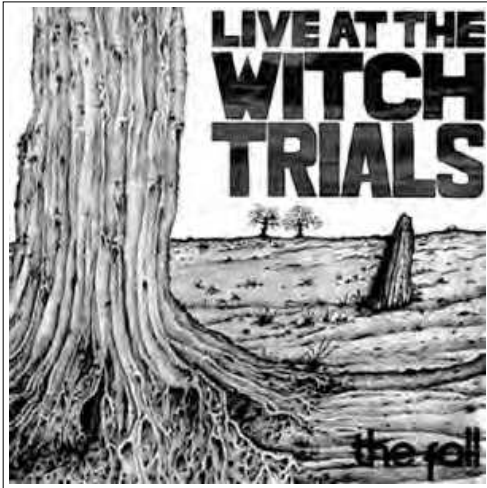
Lyrical, *Acoustics* shies away from the social and political commentary so often found in their previous work and focuses on more intense personal situations. We find Wynia crooning laments ranging from rejection of love to acceptance of ridicule. In one case, they even take a stab at the blues.

Wynia's rich voice accompanies the trio's sound very well through the majority of the album, but slightly sticks out a bit too much on several tracks. Percussionist Peter Cornett even has his own vocal track, which is a breath of fresh air in the middle of the album. Everything from the excellent musicianship to the Floydian cover art make this album worth picking up.

**Joanna Newsom, *The Milk-Eyed Mender***, DRAG CITY RECORDS By Tynan DeLong

She sounds like Billie Holiday crossed with the Wicked Witch of the East and her lyrics sometimes veer into abstruse territory, but I'll be damned if Joanna Newsom hasn't released one of the most captivating albums this year. For all her eccentricities, *The Milk-Eyed Mender* remains a fully realized work, an intimate showcase of her many musical talents that pits her as one of the breakout performers of 2004.

Using the harp as her weapon of choice, Newsom's nasal twang crawls over angelic arrangements that sound both country and classical. The off-kilter baroque charm of "Sprout and the Bean" provides



the best evidence for Newsom's melodically precise harp playing, as she confronts loneliness through her unique breed of impressionistic storytelling. When she opts for more up-beat numbers, as she does on the harpsichord-driven "Peach, Plum, Pear," the results are just as entertaining. Newsom enlists what sounds like a choir of children to accompany her, as she admits, "I am blue and unwell."

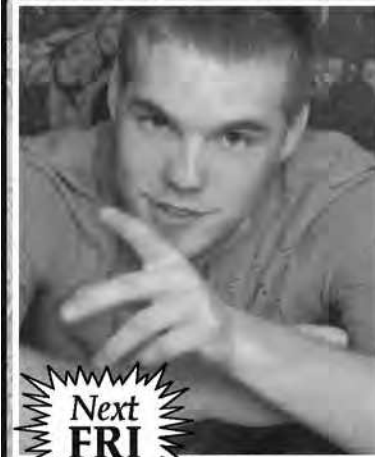
To write-off Newsom as an acquired taste would simply be unjust. The songs here revel in a certain accessibility and beauty that reveals itself after only a few listens. Newsom has a gift for making thought-provoking music without allowing her eccentric nuances to overpower the songs themselves. Take it or leave it, *The Milk-Eyed Mender* is one of the year's best.

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& BLUE MERLE  
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John Henry's  
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**Melissa Ferrick**  
& Tegan And Sara  
Saturday Nov 6 · John Henry's  
77 West Broadway · 8:30PM Doors · 21 And Over



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W.O.W. Hall  
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Allstar Band Lineup Featuring:  
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HORNSBY**  
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