

Something Old But Mostly New

Better and best CDs.

From the fabulous staff here at EW...



By Jeffrey Stout, Sales Dude

The Exies, *Head For the Door*. 2004 VIRGIN RECORDS.

It's 1994. Kurt Cobain's dead, Pearl Jam is mellow, and Alice in Chains is in remission after another rehab stint by Layne Staley. Modern rock radio is awash with guitar-drenched passion.

Now imagine it's 2004, and nothing has changed. Emotive squalor is still the gold standard of rock radio, and sounding like Nirvana is enough to reach gold. Enter The Exies, a Stone Temple Pilots sound alike, nearly a decade after STP's

high point. This sums up their new one, *Head for the Door*.

It's solid without being stellar; about what you can expect from an emulation of a genre-establishing band. Fans of The Exies say this album is a radio friendly sell-out, which it is – if it were the mid-'90s.

For someone still grasping on grunge greatness, The Exies come through. For the rest of us, we'll enjoy the current century.

SeepeopleS, *The Corn Syrup Conspiracy*.

2004 RASCALZ RECORDZ.

What we have here is a schizophrenic record featuring a frequent collaborator of Dave Matthews. If that sounds likeable, continue. If that's enough to cause some gagging, you should buy something good and relevant.

This is gentle, non-offensive, yet edgy rock with a roots feel. In the fight for a wide audience, the SeepeopleS (no explanation of the uppercase S's) achieve a well-blended forgetfulness. They touch on the psychedelic rock of Led Zeppelin (by way of Jane's Addiction), the reggae bounce of Burning Spear (by way of 311), and the electro-tinged pop of The Beta Band. Nothing sounds quite like SeepeopleS, and that's either positive or negative, depending on your expectations.

Do you like pop, reggae, and acid rock? Then you might like SeepeopleS. Looking for a band that's carving new sounds from available sounds? Then you should look elsewhere.



By Brett Campbell, Free-lance Renaissance Man.

Don Latarski, *Guitars on Holiday*. 2004 CRESCENT RECORDS.

Almost everyone in Eugene knows Don Latarski as one of Oregon's finest guitarists. Whether in solo or band settings, the longtime UO faculty member (he heads the university's guitar studies there) always displays phenomenal technique and abiding musicianship. But for all his past success as teacher, performer, author of many books on guitar technique, and composer, Latarski has long harbored an unfulfilled dream: a guitar orchestra. And

now, thanks to the magic of digital overdubbing at his recording studio, Latarski has at last been able to create the sound he's so long sought.

Latarski's *The Ephemeral Guitar Choir* (which also includes his 11-year-old son, Spencer, who sings on a few cuts) employs several instruments (including electric bass), classical techniques such as counterpoint, jazz harmony and an Americana feel derived from Latarski's admiration for Aaron Copland's populist period. Even when parts are doubled, the instruments' varied textures produce a rich, sonorous tapestry of string sounds.

But if the sound is new, the songs are as familiar as can be: holiday classics such as "Good King Wenceslas" and "The First Noel" along with some less familiar seasonal tunes. Except for "Silent Night", where the child's guileless singing just triggers a crusty journalist's hard-hearted cynicism, it makes an appealing seasonal confection. For many listeners, the disk, Latarski's second holiday collection, sounds like it'd be a near ideal accompaniment to a blazing fireplace at a holiday party on a chill winter's eve.



By Molly Templeton, Circulation Siren

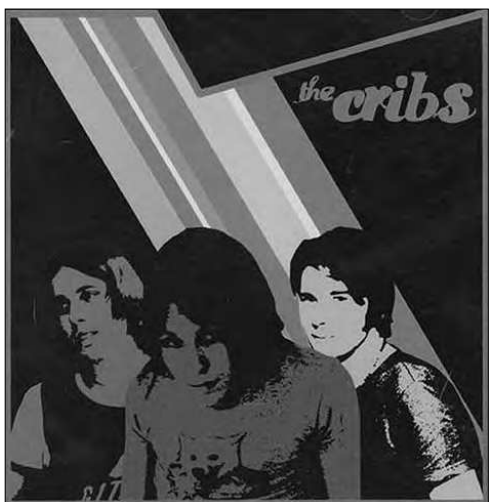
Giant Drag, *Lemona*. 2004 WICHITA RECORDINGS.

Giant Drag's Annie Hardy really hates being compared to the Breeders. The news section of her band's website includes a brief rant at the British press, who apparently insist on using this comparison. The funny thing is, the only comparable part of Giant Drag's sound is Hardy's voice, which shares a strangely ageless quality with Kim Deal's. Otherwise, the band's sound has more in com-

mon with the shoegazer bands of the late '80s and early '90s, particularly on "Cordial Invitation," where Hardy's voice floats over a thick layer of distortion. The songs are a little poppier, the lyrics much more decipherable, and in the EP's later tracks, there's a darkness reminiscent of fellow Los Angeles band Concrete Blonde. Nothing here is astonishing, but these are the kind of songs where you find yourself humming unintentionally. Worth a listen.

The Cribs, *The Cribs*. 2004 WICHITA RECORDINGS.

It isn't until track five, "Things You Should Be Knowing," that The Cribs truly reveal themselves. Until that point, they've been a pastiche of mid to late '90s indie and Britpop bands, from "Creep" era Radiohead to the



more obscure Calvin Johnson, whose uniquely deep voice seems imitated on "The Watch Trick."

In the first measures of "Things," though, things become clearer. Small guitar parts here and there ring familiarity bells, but the alarms go off when the vocals start, drawled lazily over a guitar riff that could have come straight from *Room on Fire* by The Strokes. It's not pervasive throughout the entire album, but more often than not, The Cribs bear far too much similarity to The Strokes – right down to their font choices. Though their sometimes catchy melodies are weighed down by forgettable lyrics, The Cribs have the potential to make a second album that sounds more their own.



By Todd Cooper, Production Punk-ass

Thievery Corporation, *The Cosmic Game*. 2005 EIGHTEENTH STREET LOUNGE MUSIC.

Chalk another one up for Thievery Corporation. Rob Garza and Eric Hilton seem to effortlessly charm one album to the next. Their latest release is no exception. *The Cosmic Game* is filled with that hypnotic, head-nodding world groove we've come to expect from the D.C. duo.

In this go-round, they bring back collaborators Lou Lou, Notch, and Sleepy Wonder as well as Wayne Coyne (The Flaming Lips), Perry Farrell (Jane's Addiction), David Byrne (Talking Heads) and others. The album opens with the perfectly blended Lips/Thievery track, "Marching the Hate Machines Into the Sun." This song supposedly happened via email due to the two camps' conflicting schedules. "Revolution Solution" turns out to be a great fit for Farrell. Finally, Perry made some decent electronica. "The Heart's a Lonely Hunter" (with David Byrne) is tight with rolling congas and funky horns but doesn't measure up to the Thievery remix of Byrne's "Dance On Vaseline" (*Abductions & Reconstructions*). One of the *Game's* highlights is the beautiful Gunjan. She blesses four tracks with entrancing, airy Middle Eastern vocals. Too many notable tracks to mention.

Look out for this one. It won't leave your headphones alone. *The Cosmic Game* is scheduled for a February 2005 release.



By Melissa Bearns, Emphatically Editorial

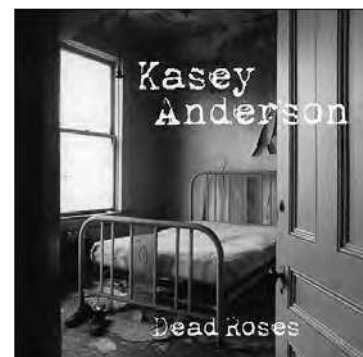
Kasey Anderson, *Dead Roses*. 2004 RESONANT NOISE RECORDS.

With a hungry ache and a country twang that's more hip than hick, Kasey

Anderson has done something amazing and special on *Dead Roses*. He's managed to create an album that transports you to dirty back roads, rocking chairs on porches and whisky-soaked melancholy. Where many try and fail, he succeeds with songs that masterfully capture the mood of a cigarette burning to ash between the fingers of bitter heartbreak.

His voice has that rusty, dusty feel and a gritty scratchiness perfectly suited for country rock about wine, women and small towns. While quite a few tracks, including "The Borderline," "Weary Heart," and "Raining In Hattiesburg" toe the downtempo line, the music is never dark. Instead it hovers in a place that's more moody, poetic and beautiful than sad.

With a perfect sense of timing, he mixes it up at just the right moments, rocking out with "5th Avenue Queen" and "Dead Roses (and Blood Red Wine)" all the while telling stories that are as universal as love, life and death.



Magdalene's Dream, *Magdalene's Dream*. 2004 PIGGYBACK RECORDS.

From the dark, razor's edge mind of Keith Hillebrandt comes this pulsating, throbbing mix of shadowy electronica. Hillebrandt, the mastermind sound designer who works for Trent Reznor and created the soundscape on NIN's *Fragile* as well as recently remixing four new U2 tracks, teams up with Lana Lokteff to create a multi-layered beat that's as smooth as waves gently rocking a boat, as deep as the ocean and as sexy as 4-inch stilettos.

It creeps in, washes over you and captures your subconscious mind. Lokteff's seductive voice whispers and coos, soothes and sucks you in. Occasionally reminiscent of Shirley Manson (Garbage), Lokteff purrs and winds the vocals through the beats in a way that makes it hard to separate her voice from the breathing layers of the songs.

"Wash Away" is particularly beautiful in the way the song itself imitates the rhythmic pulsating of waves. "What Do You Want?," one of the faster tracks, holds down a beat that's more like a slow burn than a groove.



From our rockin' music writer Vanessa Salvia: Best of 2004

Téada, *Give Us A Penny*. 2004 GREEN LINNET RECORDS, INC.

Oisín Mac Diarmada, *Ar An Bhfidil*. 2004 GREEN LINNET RECORDS, INC.

Both of these CDs feature the profound fiddle and vocals of Oisín (pronounced oh-sheen) Mac Diarmada, fiddler and founder of the young Irish group Téada, a group proving themselves the torchbearers for a new generation of traditional Irish music. There are no pseudo-Celtic, new-agey overtones on *Give Us A Penny*; just 14 traditional gems arranged and performed by five young men with their ears in the past.