

Each track is given historical perspective in extensive liner notes which detail source musicians and background. We're also kindly told which songs are jigs, like the triptych "King of the Pipes/Queen of the Fair/The Woodcock," which are reels, like "Humours of Lissadell/Maude Miller/The Jolly Tinker;" and which are airs, such as "The Trip We Took Over the Mountain." Mac Diarmada pleases further on *Ar An Bhifidil*, 17 tracks of the traditional music he was raised with in Sligo and Clare. He demonstrates the magic of pure, unadorned instrumental traditional fiddling, again detailed with source information and musical form. He includes some rarities such as "The Lark in the Morning" and "The Morning Thrush." Mac Diarmada is joined by Téada bandmates on a number of tunes.

Loretta Lynn, Van Lear Rose. 2004 INTERSCOPE RECORDS.

For the first time ever, Loretta Lynn has written all the songs on a recording. Her candidness and producer Jack White's (of White Stripes fame and long-time Lynn admirer) in-one-take style makes a bold statement that speaks to her whole life. White plays on the album, but his poised guitar riffs don't detract from the warm country atmosphere.

A young bride and mother several times over before gaining stardom on the Grand Ole Opry, Lynn has a diamond-in-the-rough persona that shines through. The album's most memorable songs are the autobiographical ones. "Little Red Shoes" is a spoken reminiscence about Lynn's mother stealing some shoes for her. She revisits her hometown of Butcher Hollow on "High on a Mountaintop," and the title track is about her father and mother falling in love. She tells. As only Lynn can, tales of adultery in "Family Tree" and a widow's sorrow in "Miss Being Mrs." There's even a duet with White entitled "Portland, Oregon."



PJ Harvey, Uh Huh Her. 2004 ISLAND RECORDS.

Harvey plays everything but drums here, proving once again that she is bold and bad-ass as ever. Guitars dominate on this one with bitterness and bile parading forth at every opportunity. She snarls about tainted love throughout, such as the angst-ridden "Who The Fuck?" and "The Darker Days of Me and Him." We sense a woman desperately beating back her personal demons, and while we know she'll eventually win, after listening to *Uh Huh Her*, we don't feel better for it. Gone is the slick city girl of her last release, 2000's *Stories From The City, Stories From The Sea*, and in her place is a tortured banshee, intoning primitively about sex, love and pain with all the glamour we expect from this enigmatic rock goddess.

Macha, Forget Tomorrow. 2004 JETSET RECORDS.

Athens, Georgia's Macha deftly combines trance-inducing lyrics with richly layered rhythms and instrumentation borrowed from Indonesia. Their latest since 2000's collaboration with Bedhead, *Forget Tomorrow* retains the Indonesian influence, but it's less distinctive and the soaring harmonies have all but evaporated. Musically, *Forget Tomorrow* has more in common with founding member Josh McKay's *Seaworthy* project than with Macha's sophisticated self-titled 1998 release. The group are masters at manipulating an indie aesthetic, non-Western musical influence and minimalist lyrics in a way I still love, but *Forget Tomorrow's* motif is more ambient sound collage than Silk Road exotica.

Eagles of Death Metal, Peace Love Death Metal. 2004 ANT ACID AUDIO.

Nothing like The Eagles or death metal, this release is Party Record Extraordinaire, sounding like a ray-gun equipped Jon Spencer raising the love child of White Stripes and Queens of the Stone Age. In fact, QOTSA guitarist Josh Homme is the album's producer and one half of the duo, along with Homme's longtime friend and Millionaire's vocalist J. Everett Hughes. Distillers frontwoman Brody Dalle contributes. Whatever long-running inside joke spawned this record is buried within the singer's falsetto and Homme's subversive guitar. Their songs are silly and self-aware, but full of indulgent swagger, a feel-good agenda and over-the-top sex appeal. Own it!



Bebel Gilberto, Bebel Gilberto.

2004 ZIRIGUIBOOM/CRAMMED.

Daughter of Brazilian Bossa Nova god Joao Gilberto and step-daughter to pneumatic singer Astrud Gilberto, Bebel is uniquely qualified to exist within the Bossa, lounge and jazz worlds. Her self-titled third release is sultry and sweet, warm as a Brazilian summer and as carefree, especially on the tracks she sings in Portuguese. Bebel's mother, popular singer Miúcha, provides backing vocals on the track "Aganjú," an up-tempo song with an electronica feel. This CD's mix of faster and slower tempos and lush backing music paired with minimalist acoustic guitar gives a feeling of balance and simplicity. It's perfect mood music when you want something romantic yet sophisticated.



Shoghaken Folk Ensemble. 2004 TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS.

Armenian Lullabies and Traditional Dances of Armenia. 2004 TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS.

Formed in 1991, the Ensemble use only traditional Armenian instrumentation, maintaining an authentic sound as they explore the folk music heritage of this smallest Republic of the former U.S.S.R., adjacent to Turkey. Extensively detailed with liner notes, both CDs showcase the

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