



Happy Daze

The **Passion Pit** spell curses music writers to stammer out dubiously simple explanations for why we're so charmed by the Boston quintet: They're just so *happy*. Last year's *Chunk of Change* EP had its moments, but anyone who claims it was obvious that Passion Pit would follow it with the divinely glossy *Manners* must have the gift of foresight.

Manners has a plain, unexceptional cover; the band is made up of unremarkable and casually dressed twentysomething dudes. The decoration is all in the arrangements: in the children's choir that turns up here and there; in the layers of backing vocals; in the bouncing rhythms that make *Manners* distinctly unsuited for office listening. Drummer Nate Donmoyer propels the rest of the band as they keep pace with singer Michael Angelakos' frenzied glee, but it's the endlessly varied electronic twitches and tweaks that give Passion Pit's songs their incredible exuberance. The dreamy density of "Sleepyhead," with its pulsing rhythms, reminds me of the (before their time?) Avalanches; "Little Secrets" bubbles with joy and a giddy sense of freedom; "Moth's Wings" starts with a twisty dulcimer that's joined by a guitar that, for one tiny second, calls to mind AC/DC's "Thunderstruck," of all things. A sense of possibility reaches right out of the song: Anything could bloom out of that intro. Throughout, Angelakos' unselfconscious falsetto peaks and shimmies and makes singing along really hard. It's almost too cute, or would be in different packaging. Passion Pit could come across as one massive gimmick, but there's no irony in these songs. They're an elaborate, confectionary composition, a treat for your aural sweet tooth that brings permission to dance like an idiot. It's OK. It's OK to forget about being cool. Passion Pit plays at 9 pm Friday, Oct. 9, at the EMU, UO. Free tickets are gone; the standby line begins at 6:30 pm outside the EMU lobby's main doors. – *Molly Templeton*

A History of a History

Given that they've been making good records for over 20 years, you could make a case for Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang as the most consistent musicians in indie rock today. Their discography spans six studio albums as **Damon & Naomi**, preceded by three studio albums as two-thirds of Galaxie 500. Damon & Naomi's music has emphasized different elements over the years but shares an attention to texture and detail, a genuine sense of yearning and mystery in Krukowski's vocals and a willingness to seek out unexpected collaborators. 2000's *With Ghost*, an album that finds the duo joined by the Japanese psych-rock band Ghost, is a high point – though 2007's *Within These Walls*, their most recent studio album, isn't far behind, pushing their dream-pop sound in directions both intimate and baroque.

Lately, the group has been in a retrospective mode: Their most recent album, released on their label 20/20/20, is titled *The Sub Pop Years* and, as the title suggests, compiles highlights from their four albums released by Sub Pop. A collection of live performances and videos, *1001 Nights*, was recently released by the Brooklyn-based Factory 25, and the group's 1992 debut *More Sad Hits* was reissued by 20/20/20 last year.

The musical elements heard on *More Sad Hits* – Yang's expressive lilt, Krukowski's more subdued tone, and a penchant for slow buildups and quietly beautiful passages – remain intact 17 years later. But they've served the duo well, providing a distinctive yet malleable foundation for a style that remains timeless. And while the evolution and exploration characterized by Yang and Krukowski's work to date is significant in its own right, *Within These Walls* suggests that theirs is a style with many avenues yet to explore. Damon & Naomi play with A Hack and a Hacksaw at 8 pm Sunday, Oct. 11, at Cozmic Pizza. \$8. – *Tobias Carroll*

The New Americana

Years before American pop musicians ever developed an obsession with klezmer into a successful career – ex-Neutral Milk Hotel drummer Jeremy Barnes' band A Hawk and A Hacksaw (also playing in town this week), or Beirut's *Gulag Orkestar* – there was **Gogol Bordello**, a motley band of immigrant and American punks whose rowdy, theatrical stage shows popularized the genre and enamored the group to a mainstream audience. The band comes by its sound honestly: Frontman Eugene Hutz comes from Ukraine, but he and his family fled the aftermath of Chernobyl. Hutz eventually relocated to New York City, where he started a nine-person band with other immigrants from all over the world (and a couple of Americans) that, after 10 years of releasing records as Gogol Bordello, became the unofficial prototype for the litany of other "gypsy punk" bands that followed in their footsteps. It didn't hurt that Hutz' hoarse, heavily-accented howling, frantic double-time klezmer melodies and punk drumming made for one of the most raucous live performances you'd experience (never mind that one show at which he extinguished a smoke on his bare flesh). It also didn't hurt that Hutz unintentionally landed a co-starring role in the film *Everything is Illuminated* as Elijah Wood's distant Ukrainian relation, Alex (you know, the guy who calls everything "premier"). But while Gogol Bordello's sound is dominated by Eastern European klezmer, the result is a decidedly American hybrid sound – one born of musical traditions that blended together in the cultural melting pot of New York City to become something distinctly, irrevocably American. Gogol Bordello and Apostle of Hustle play at 8 pm Tuesday, October 13, at the McDonald Theatre. \$22.50 adv., \$25 door. – *Sara Brickner*

Positively Lyrical

Brother Ali's blunt and boisterous lyrical flow comes from a time in hip hop when the elements of DJing, MCing, breaking and graffiti art were respected as holy. With a hip hop landscape that feels like it is finally leaving the super-repetitive chorus and Auto-Tune behind, a return to lyricism and punchy beats marks Ali's newest album, *Us*.

Ali alternates his boasts and chest puffing with pleading and self-deprecation, creating a yin and yang of self-commentary from an MC who has traditionally been extremely self-aware and focused inward. *Us* contains understated slice-of-life scenarios and character profiles that show a positivity rarely seen in hip hop. On the track "House Keys," a quiet tenant performs justifiable burglary on his loud, drug-dealing neighbors upstairs and gets away with it. Part of the song "Fresh Air" describes the sobriety from drugs Ali's ex-mother-in-law has experienced and his newfound positive relationship with her.

Anybody who has listened to Atmosphere will probably be able to pick out the rhythms that beat master Ant provides for this album, especially in the downtempo moments. Ant chooses a wide array of instruments for this go-round, including wailing guitars and vibraphone. He uses a big brass marching band sound for the track "The Preacher," which seems to be influenced by Outkast's "B.O.B." or a Gnarls Barkley uptempo track.

Brother Ali plays with Evidence, BK One and Toki Wright at 9 pm Monday, Oct. 12, at the WOW Hall. \$13-\$15. – *Shaun O'Dell*



The Walls Rise Again

Remember Janitor Joe? Gnomes of Zurich? Remember when Hammerhead made beers foam over simply by playing? Seriously, I heard this happened at one of their early (sparsely attended) shows, when beers were sitting on the bar some 20 feet from the stage. Now *that's* rock and roll. But I digress. If you remember these bands fondly, you would think **Kowloon Walled City** would make an excellent addition to the Amphetamine Reptile roster circa 1994.

When I first listened to KWC's 2008 EP *Turk Street*, I noticed only the sludgy doom heaviness. But a recent review on Metalsucks.net agrees with me, saying "you're going to fucking LOVE this album if you have ever been a fan of Unsane or other AmRep artists." But it's not so cut-and-dried for the band.

"I guess I can see that," says vocalist Scott Evans, of the AmRep comparisons. "I love Unsane and they are definitely a jump-off point for me for this band. But I'm really the only one." The AmRep sound is not a musical goal for the other band members. On the new record, Evans says he hears the results of a more collaborative writing process. After all, *Turk Street* was recorded after only a few months together. "We got better at working together, better at doing our thing. At this point I think any AmRep-ness is a reflection of what we naturally write. Nobody ever says, 'Let's do a Cows thing here.'" Bottom line, this has depth and interest for music fans to approach from any number of directions. Last Empire (with Joe Preston), Lucika and Kowloon Walled City play at 9 pm Friday, Oct. 9, at Oak Street Speakeasy. 21+. Free. – *Vanessa Salvia*

