

JOHNNY VINYL'S TOP 10

Rock and roll isn't dead — it's just gone underground

By JOHNNY VINYL
Ride the vibe

If one were to listen to Kiss' Gene Simmons or refer to Rolling Stone's Top 20 albums of 2017, it might seem that rock music is indeed dead.

For those who care, rock and roll is as alive and well in 2017 as it has ever been, it's just not mainstream anymore. There were some great albums released in 2017, maybe even a classic or two.

10. King Woman: "Created in the Image of Suffering"

Finally something completely fresh in the metal scene. A three piece sludge-metal band with a powerhouse vocalist in Kristina Esfandiari that catapults them far from any genre limitations. This lady can go from sinister to serene and all points in between with operatic precision and control. She could give Diamanda Galas a run for her money. The band guides her where few have gone before.

9. Mogwai: "Every Country's Sun"

To attend a show of these men from Glasgow is to experience sonic bliss. There is truly nothing quite like them. Sadly, they are one of those artists who have a really difficult time recreating that feeling in the studio. Mogwai have been focusing on soundtracks (Zidane, Atomic, Before the Flood) as of late and it has helped them harness the studio more effectively than ever before. "Every Country's Sun" is the soundtrack for you, the listener, to play as you live.

8. Lincoln Barr: "Trembling Frames"

Lincoln Barr has taken off his Red Jacket for this intimate jazz record. With song titles like "Admit You're a Monster," "How To Escape," "Desperate Tormentors," "Memory Up and Die," "Giving Up My Inheritance," "Tell it to the Judge" and "Fellowship of Hunted Things" you know going in that it's not a party record. What it is — it's one of the most poignant collections of music to come out this year.

7. Robyn Hitchcock: "Robyn Hitchcock"

Robyn Hitchcock's 21st solo release is his first eponymous album. His career is what Syd Barrett's should have been. Few can infuse their songs with such clever word play, self-deprecating admissions, wry and dry sense of humor while adding social commentary in such an articulate presentation. Musically, "Robyn Hitchcock" is much closer in sound to Hitchcock's former band, The Egyptians, than his more recent solo offerings. Magical storytelling from a master of the craft.

6. Dream Syndicate: "How Did I Find Myself Here?"

As one of the main purveyors of the Paisley Underground (amalgam of jangle pop, punk and psychedelic), The Dream Syndicate have decided that the 2017 music scene really needed an influx of electric guitar music. "How Did I Find Myself Here?" accomplishes that task in spades, especially on the 11-minute title track. Former bassist/vocalist Kendra Smith performs on the album's closing track, "Kendra's Dream," bringing everything full circle. A very welcome return.

5. Mavis Staples: "If All I Was Was Black"

Mavis Staples, along with her father Roebuck and various siblings as the Staple Singers, was often the opening act for Martin Luther King Jr. when he gave public addresses. If there is anyone qualified to deal with race issues in the U.S. with credibility, it's Mavis. However, white musician Jeff Tweedy of

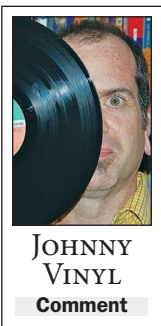
Uncle Tupelo/Wilco fame wrote all of the songs from a black perspective. On paper, it appears to be a train wreck. In actuality, it's one of the most compelling releases of the year. Together, they make some pretty bold statements. Musically, it's all over the place. As you'd expect a gospel groove exists throughout, but there are jams heavier than anything Wilco has done in years. This is the third time that Tweedy has produced Staples and there's an obvious mutual love and respect that flows equally between the two that permeates these proceedings.

4. New Pornographers: "Whiteout Conditions"

All three internationally recognized Canadian musical collectives (Broken Social Scene, Arcade Fire and New Pornographers) released albums in 2017. Broken Social Scene's "Hug of Thunder" is a pleasant though largely innocuous affair; Arcade Fire's "Everything Now" is one of the worst albums ever released, by anyone! The New Pornographers "Whiteout Conditions" is the sublime, "feel-good" record of the year. It's one of those releases that gets better as the listeners' familiarity with the songs increase. How can you lose when one of your five singer/songwriters is Neko Case?

3. Ryan Adams: "Prisoner"

Ryan Adams used to record every song that he wrote. Some years would see three or more releases. Every album had a few gems, some mediocre and a serious dud or two. Then he married Mandy Moore. A normal life for a while. The songs came much fewer and farther between. He and Moore divorce.



JOHNNY VINYL
Comment



Photo by Amy Harris/Invision/AP



Contributed photo

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Mavis Staples performs at the Pilgrimage Music and Cultural Festival on Sept. 24, 2017, in Franklin, Tenn. Lincoln Barr has played in Seattle-based bands and recently moved to Eastern Oregon. "Hot Thoughts" by Spoon is Johnny Vinyl's top album of 2017.

He immediately puts his emotions down in song. The result "The Prisoner" is Adams' most complete, rewarding release of his career. The pain is clear and so is the fact that he still has a tremendous amount of love and respect for his ex. The best "breakup" record in a long time.

2. Grails: "Chalice Hymnal"

They hail from Portland, but they hardly ever perform anywhere on the West Coast. They recently started playing infrequently on the East Coast. They tour Europe regularly; they're huge in France. They do an instrumental form of rock that incorporates whatever is necessary to convey the groove. "Chalice Hymnal" is intense and pastoral, beautiful and brutal, mighty and meek. Progressive music at its most majestic.

1. Spoon: "Hot Thoughts"

Indie, alternative band from the Austin, Texas, that is equal parts R.E.M. and Dr. John infuse their rock with southern hospitality and charm. Spoon have steadily released entertaining

alternative music with a southern vibe since the late '90s. While all of their releases have their moments, a minor criticism of the band has been that they are a little monochromatic — everything begins to sound similar.

As evidenced by the psychedelic human skull on the cover, that has all changed with "Hot Thoughts." On their ninth album, they finally feel comfortable in the studio to literally try anything, even a five-minute instrumental as closing statement that may be the boldest of the album. This studio confidence has helped make this their most consistently engaging album.

Dance beats smash into indie rock social melancholia creating an amalgam that makes you go "hmmm" while shaking your booty.

A retired educator, Johnny Vinyl spends his days with Lucifer, an 8-year-old German shepherd, reading and riding the vibe. His column, Ride the Vibe, focuses on entertainment. Contact him via tmalgesini@eastoregonian.com

MOVIE REVIEW

'Jumanji' sequel goes back to the jungle with stars, good hearted fun

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

More than two decades after Robin Williams conquered that pesky board game, "Jumanji" has been resurrected with more and glossier stars (Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart and Jack Black), a comedy director and a "modern" twist. The result, "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle," is a very sweet, and generally entertaining body swap lark with some nice messages about being, and believing in, yourself.

Why it had to be "Jumanji" is the head-scratcher. Even speaking as someone who was 12 when the first came out, and genuinely enjoyed the Joe Johnston-directed adventure and the fantasy of being swept up in a board game come to life, the idea that a die-hard "Jumanji" fanbase exists, or that the "brand" is so rock-solid that it needs a reboot, seems dubious at best.

There are pointless sequels everywhere of course, and questioning the purpose for their



Frank Masi/Sony Pictures via AP

This image released by Sony Pictures shows Karen Gillan, from left, Dwayne Johnson and Kevin Hart in "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle."

existence is a fruitless exercise. The only reason I bring it up here is because Jake Kasdan's "Welcome to the Jungle" spends a fair amount of genuinely unnecessary time straining to justify how it is connected to "Jumanji" including a whole prologue establishing how

it had evolved into a video game by 1996.

The conceit here is that when you're transported into the game, you are suddenly a character in the game, in body, voice and skillset but with your earthbound personality pretty much intact. This is how a

"Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle"
★ ★ ★ ☆
PG-13, 119 minutes

group of mismatched teens sharing the same detention, including the nerdy, shy Spencer (Alex Wolff), the football player Fridge (Ser'Darius Blain), the superficial popular girl Bethany (Madison Iseman) and the too-smart for gym class Martha (Morgan Turner), transform into avatars played by Dwayne Johnson (Spencer), Kevin Hart (Fridge), Jack Black (Bethany) and Karen Gillan (Martha).

It's a role reversal for everyone — the nerdy girl is hot now (and scantily clad), the hot girl is a soft, middle aged man, the skinny guy is The Rock and the big football player is now tiny and wimpy — and they all have to go through the stages of learning to accept their new bodies, talents and

shortcomings. There is of course a lot of easy comedy in these situations. And all the main actors/avatars are kind of great at imitating the facial expressions of their teenage counterparts, especially Johnson and Black.

How can you argue with a bunch of movie stars acting goofy and hawking a "believe in yourself" message? There are some odd beats and choices, especially around Gillan's Martha, who is costumed in nearly nothing (surely as a send up of what female characters usually wear in video games, but however meta it might have been intended to be, it is still literally her costume). There's also a plot line that hinges on her learning how to flirt from Bethany (because they all decide that flirting with the bad guy security guards is the only way they can get past them).

But "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" probably doesn't warrant that much scrutiny. Its surface pleasures are strong enough for a fun holiday afternoon at the movies.

WHAT TO DO

Festivals

- Christmas Light Show**
 - Begins Dec. 1; nightly
 - SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road
 - www.visitsage.com
 - Free. Light show accompanied by Christmas music (tune into 106.9 FM on car radio).
- Melonville Comedy Festival**
 - Saturday, Jan. 27; 8 p.m.
 - Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395
 - www.facebook.com
 - \$35. 21-and-older show features co-headliners Kermat Apio and Derek Richards. Opening the show is Cory Michaelis. Tickets available at the conference center. Food available for purchase.

Art, Museums & Authors

- The Art of the Gift**
 - Tuesday-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.
 - Pendleton Center for the Arts, 214 N. Main St.

- www.pendletonarts.org
- Free. Gallery features creative gifts from craftspeople from across the nation. Runs through Dec. 30.
- Great Gifts Show**
 - Tuesday-Sundays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.
 - Peterson's Gallery and Chocolatier, 1925 Main St., Baker City
 - www.petersonsgallery.net
 - Free. Features hand-selected recommendations for Christmas gifts from new productions by local favorite artists. Items include ornaments, vases, photography and unique pieces that can be used as stocking stuffers.
- "Art of Survival - Enduring the Turmoil of Tule Lake"**
 - Monday-Saturdays, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
 - Tamastslitk Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.
 - www.tamastslitk.org
 - \$10/adults, \$9/senior citizens, \$6/youths, free/5 and under or \$25/family of four. Exhibit probes the complexity of the Japanese-American confinement site in Newell, California, during World War II. Runs through Jan. 7.

Music

- Nuketown**
 - Saturday, Dec. 23; 8 p.m. No cover
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission
- James Dean Kindie**
 - Saturday, Dec. 23; 9 p.m.
 - Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's, 137 S. Main St., Pendleton
 - No cover. J.D. Kindie performs late-night lounge set, including country & western, jazz standards and sombre Christmas tunes.
- Open Mic at GP**
 - Thursday, Dec. 28; 7-9 p.m.
 - Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton
 - No cover. All ages are welcome during the last Thursday of each month. Bring your instrument, voice, family and friends.
- Funk Factory**
 - Friday, Dec. 29; Saturday, Dec. 30; Sunday, Dec. 31; 8 p.m. No cover
 - Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.
- Jam Night with Josiah**
 - Friday, Jan. 19; 6:30-9 p.m.

- Historic Balch Hotel, 40 S. Heimrich St., Dufur
- No cover. Bring your favorite instrument and share the tunes. Extra percussion available for musicians to play.
- Night life**
- Karaoke w/DJ David**
 - Saturdays; 8 p.m.
 - Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla
- DJ & Trivia**
 - Saturdays; 9 p.m.
 - Midway Tavern, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston
- Mac's Trivia Night**
 - Tuesdays; 7 p.m. No cover
 - Mac's Bar & Grill, 1400 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton
 - 21 and older. Eat. Drink. Think. Teams of 2-8 compete in trivia contest with other teams. Live host and prizes, including \$50 gift card for winning team.
- Wine tasting**
 - Fridays, 4-8 p.m.
 - Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.
- Karaoke w/DJ David**
 - Fridays; 8 p.m.
 - Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

- DJ and dancing**
 - Fridays, 8 p.m.
 - The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston
- Karaoke**
 - Fridays; 9 p.m.
 - Midway Tavern, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston
- Cimmi's Late Night Martini Lounge**
 - Fridays; 9 p.m.-midnight
 - Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's, 137 S. Main St., Pendleton
 - No cover. Features martinis, mixology and music.
- Theater, stage, film & lectures**
- "As the Ball Drops on Times Square"**
 - Sunday, Dec. 31; 5:30 p.m.
 - Maxwell Siding Event Center, 145 N. First Place, Hermiston
 - \$45. Murder mystery dinner theater presentation features prime rib or lemon chicken dinner. Also, party favors and toasting in the new year with sparkling cider. Formal wear encouraged, but not required. For tickets, call 541-571-7293 or 541-567-8774.

- Swim Team Talent Show**
 - Saturday, Jan. 6; 7 p.m.
 - Hermiston High School commons, 600 S. First St.
 - \$10/person, \$30/family. Raises money for transportation costs for Hermiston High School swim team. Intermission includes a bake sale and a raffle for an iPad and numerous gift cards.
- Cabin Fever Concert**
 - Saturday, Jan. 13 & Sunday, Jan. 20; 6 p.m.
 - Hermiston Conference Center, 415 S. Highway 395
 - \$15/show only, \$38/dinner & show. Limited tickets available for the Dutch oven dinner by Sharon's Sweet Treats. John Wambeke & Friends provide an evening of music and humor. Tickets available at Cottage Flowers, 1725 N. First St., Hermiston.
- Hot tickets**
- Bardy Dec. 31. (AC-DC tribute band) Vol. 31. Pheasant Bar & Grill. Tickets (\$20)
- Dancing with the Hermiston Stars. Jan. 13, Hermiston High School. Tickets (\$10-\$20) via www.desertartscouncil.com