

Bandcampin': Good stuff for your ears

BY BEN SALMON • The Bulletin

Bandcamp is an online music platform used largely by independent artists and record labels to stream songs and sell merchandise. It's also a vibrant virtual community teeming with interesting sounds just waiting to be discovered. Each week, I'll highlight three releases available on the site that are well worth your time and attention. If you find something you dig, please consider supporting the artist with a purchase.

DOMINIQUE FILS-AIMÉ, "Three Little Words"

In 2018, Dominique Fils-Aimé burst onto the scene with her debut full-length album "Nameless," a collection of bluesy songs that explored the roots of African American music through "historical silences and sorrows." A year later, her follow-up effort — "Stay Tuned!" — did the same, this time digging into the civil rights movement of the 1960s through jazz. Now, it's time to complete the trilogy with Fils-Aimé's outstanding new album "Three Little Words," which manages to echo soul music from the mid-20th century (think Billie Holiday, Etta James) but still feel completely fresh and modern.

One reason for that are the arrangements on these songs, which are at once silky smooth and crackling with energy. But the star of this show is Montreal-based Fils-Aimé, who delivers a confident and compelling vocal performance in one of recorded music's first real "wowza" moments of the new year.

JEFF HANSON, "Jeff Hanson"

In the mid-1990s, the Northwest-based indie label Kill Rock Stars achieved considerable success when it released two early albums from a preternaturally talented folk singer-songwriter named Elliott Smith, who died much too young in 2003. A decade later, the cycle more or less repeated itself with a Minneapolis singer-songwriter

named Jeff Hanson, who, like Smith, wrote quiet, sad, ultra-melodic folk songs, and who, like Smith, died much too young in 2009. Before he passed, however, he released three albums for Kill Rock Stars. All of them are very much worth hearing, but the best of the bunch is his 2005 self-titled effort, a stunningly beautiful gathering of acoustic guitar strums, poignant lyrics, baroque accompaniment and Hanson's angelic voice.

SWEEPING PROMISES, "Hunger For A Way Out"

Like I am with heavy metal and hip-hop, I tend to be pretty picky when it comes to post-punk. That is not to say I have discerning taste or that I only gravitate to the cream

of the crop, but simply that when I listen to artists in these genres, I find a lot more that I don't love than those that I do. And I think one reason for that is that I'm much more likely to connect with music that makes use of a catchy melody than music that does not. Sweeping Promises is an excellent example: The Boston-based band uses a lot of post-punk elements — prickly guitars, workhorse bass lines, minimalist synths — but they do it in a way that prioritizes actual over bloodless brooding. "Hunger For A Way Out" is their debut (released last year) and boy does it point the way to a promising future.

■ Ben Salmon is a Bend-based music journalist and host of *Left Of The Dial*, which airs 8-10 p.m. Thursdays on KPOV, 88.9 FM and streams at kpo.org.



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