



ABOUT | ADVERTISE | CONTACT | STORE | RSS

metrotimes

NEWS | ARTS | CULTURE | MUSIC | SCREENS | FOOD+DRINK | CALENDAR | BLOGS | BEST OF | FREE STUFF | CLASSIFIEDS | ARCHIVES | BLOWOUT | MUSIC | BROWSE LOCAL MUSIC | MUSIC EVENTS | ADD YOUR ACT

VODKA VODKA JANUARY 29, 2010 VODKA VODKA JANUARY 29, 2010

12/30/2009

SHARE EMAIL PRINT COMMENT [0]

MUSIC

The best music of 2009

The tops in pop, punk, jazz, country and hip hop



BY METRO TIMES MUSIC STAFF

Does it actually matter when we still have no public option and it looks like there's never going to be one? Lou Reed may have sung about lives saved by rock 'n' roll, but the public option would probably save a lot more down the line. ...

Anyway, no more critical consensus, blah, blah, blah ... I've been writing the same thing about these year-end polls for the last three years. So let's just say it was the final year of an incredibly lousy decade and just get into the meat of the matter, OK?

BILL HOLDSHIP

1) **Bruce Springsteen**, *Working on a Dream* (Columbia): It's a minority opinion but, for my money, this was the best of his post-9/11 E Street trilogy of "comeback" LPs, returning to the classic rock sounds (from the Beach Boys and Orbison to Merseybeat and the Byrds) and motifs (albeit with an older man's perspective) that worked so well for him earlier in his career.

2) **Glasvegas**, *Glasvegas* (Columbia): Technically a 2008 release, though it didn't hit U.S. shores as a physical product until January of this year. Glasvegas produced some of the best aural psychocandy to come along in years, delivering a sense of redemption while dealing with some of the darkest subjects known to mankind.

3) **The Raveonettes**, *In and Out of Control* (Vice Records): Speaking of psychocandy ... This was one of the great rock 'n' roll bands of a decade in which there weren't a whole lot, and despite some naysaying, this



EVENTS EATS CLUBS

Keyword search

January 2010

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Detailed search
Choose Category
All future dates
All cities

Preferences
 Critic's picks
 Non-recurring
 All ages

Add your event to our database

See how Michigan Marijuana Advocates can help you. [Click here](#)

Now legally issued to patients who need to treat:

- Chronic pain
- Nausea
- Cancer
- HIV/AIDS
- Migranes
- GERD
- Hepatitis C
- Arthritis
- Neuropathy
- DDD
- Crohn's Disease
- Fibromyalgia
- Seizures disorders
- IBS
- Multiple Sclerosis

Call 248-747-0836 for appt.

Michigan Marijuana Advocates

Browse Category PLACE CLASSIFIED AD

Top Jobs Homes Attorneys Autos

LAW ENFORCEMENT: Full time, Part time
APPLY TODAY: Start Tomorrow
MEDICAL TECH: Full time, Part time
TRUCK DRIVER: Full time, Part time
COLLEGE GRADS!: Full time, Part time

View all TOP JOBS ads



was an excellent addition to the Danish-by-way-of-NYC duo's POP! recording legacy.

4) **Rosanne Cash**, *The List* (Manhattan Records): Her own words in the CD booklet, which include a TS Elliot quote, basically say it all: "This record is truly about history, respect, family, love and legacy. To paraphrase T.S. Eliot, I have arrived where I started, and I have known it for the first time." Absolutely gorgeous.

5) **Wilco**, *Wilco (The Album)* (Nonesuch): The "comeback" album of the year, artistically speaking, at least for some of us, and their first studio recording to let Nils Cline really shine, even as he often takes a step back and out of the limelight here while at the same time allowing Jeff Tweedy's seemingly new sense of humor to even include a great George Harrison pastiche.

6) **Green Day**, *21st Century Breakdown* (Reprise): A most ambitious take on a new lost generation following eight disastrous years of Bush. Better than *American Idiot* ... or at least Billie Joe Armstrong has written some even greater pop songs this time out.

7) **John Doe & the Sadies**, *Country Club* (YepRoc): Two covers albums (which happen to share a classic Hank Williams tune) on one list may say a lot about the new material that's out there right now. Nevertheless, this was the best country album to come along in eons and the kind of music that used to be found on beer garden jukeboxes in small towns throughout the country.

8) **New York Dolls**, *'Cause I Sez So* (Atco/Rhino): Perhaps subconsciously docked a few points because it only includes two original Dolls (and a few folks are still steaming about that). And yet with Todd Rundgren's classic production, it also sounds like the official follow-up to *In Too Much Too Soon*.

9) **Eminem**, *Relapse* (Interscope): They made him go to rehab, yes, yes, yes ... and it still didn't sound like he lost a step to these ears. True star power, pure and simple.

10) **Cheap Trick**, *The Latest* (Cheap Trick): Who'd've ever think it at this late date? Pure pop with plenty of power.

TOP 5 BEST INDIE DETROIT ALBUMS:

1) **Bobby Emmett**, *Learning Love* (Self-released): Pop hooks to beat the band and a collection of songs that touches every single bubblegum base. Great, great stuff. Probably belongs on the list above. ...

2) **The Hard Lessons**, *Arms Forrest* (Quack! Media): Yes! Their best yet!

3) **Doop & the Inside Outlaws**, *Everett Belcher*: Doug Duprie and his pal Ty Stone are two of D-town's best current tunesmiths. Not many indie rockers could cover a Springsteen hit song this effectively either.

4) **Matt Jones**, *The Black Path* (self-released): With the right management, this folk-rocker could be on the cover of *Paste*, if not *Rolling Stone*.

5) **t/k Please leave a small amount of space for this. t/k Please leave a small amount of space for this. t/k Please leave a small amount of space for this.**



ECORSE 1 BEDROOM APARTMENT : For Rent
RENTAL HOMES IN DETROIT :
ROOMS FOR RENT: Homes & Apartments Available
 View all **TOP HOMES/RENTALS** ads
BANKRUPTCY: Criminal Defense, Family Law, Firearms
RASOR LAW FIRM PLLC.: Sharp. Agressive. Responsive.
RYAN B. MORAN ATTORNEY & COUNSELOR OF LAW : Bankruptcy Attorney

View all **TOP ATTORNEY** ads
WHAT'S MY TRADE-IN-WORTH?:
THIS PAGE IS SPONSORED BY LONG FAMILY AUTO: FINANCING!
LONGFAMILYAUTO.COM:
PRE-OWNED INVENTORY!

View all **TOP AUTO** ads

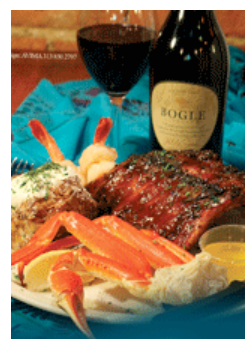


NEWSLETTER
 Get MetroTimes in your mailbox every week.

BUZZ PAGE
 Free stuff!

EVENT PIX
 Photos of people like you at our events.

MT@TWITTER
 MT@FACEBOOK
 MT@MYSPACE
 MT@FLICKR

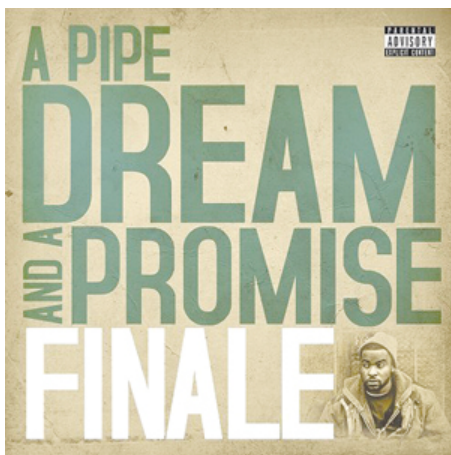


NEW MENU!
 Pasta, Lobster, Mac & Cheese, Choice Steaks, Lamb Chops + All Your Favorites.





this.



KENT "ZACKY" ALEXANDER

1) **Church of Misery**, *Houses of the Unholy* (Rise Above): This Japanese band's musical philosophy is anchored in the devilish snarl of the first two Black Sabbath LPs filtered through late '80s thrash metal and krautrock, the canon of German psychedelia.

2) **Sunn O))),** *Monoliths & Dimensions* (Southern Lord): These avant-metal drone-mongers have finally thrust themselves into unclassifiable territories as they morph their metallic soundscapes into workouts of pure creativity.

3) **Bat for Lashes**, *Two Suns* (Parlophone): Natasha Khan's Bat for Lashes is a vehicle to display her chamber pop songwriting ability and folk-tronic balladry, as well as to showcase the gift that is her voice, a stunning, piercing cry of pure nerve-rattling emotion.

4) **In the Field**, *Lechuguilla* (Saw Her Ghost): This Michigan (from Midland), sludge-metal duo toys with music dynamics here and ends up creating heart-stopping, spatial mini-symphonies.

5) **Cobalt**, *Gin* (Profound Lore): This enigmatic Colorado duo is a product of the collision of phlegm-gurgling black metal and the grinding, grating white-noise wash of sludge metal, complete with literate lyrics plucked from the likes of Hemingway and Hunter S. Thompson.

6) **Acid Mothers Temple**, *Dark Side of the Black Moon: What Planet Are We On?* (Important): Japan's Acid Mother Temple must have either unearthed some ever-thriving source of psychedelic inspiration or they're in possession of some very potent drugs. Actually, that *might* be one and the same.

7) **Up-Tight**, *The Beginning of the End* (8MM): A slew of black-lit slow-burners from one of Japan's oldest-running (and decidedly most adept) Velvet Underground worshippers.

8) **Nick Cave and Warren Ellis**, *White Lunar* (Mute): A compilation that collects atmospheric cuts from a few of Cave and Ellis' film scores, including some of the gorgeous tracks from *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*.

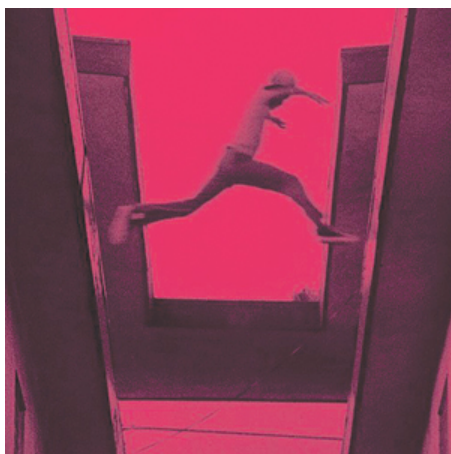
9) **Baroness**, *Blue Record* (Relapse): Baroness turns in a bang-up job that reworks the structures of sludge metal, while delivering a record that's punchy, catchy and actually seems to get a kick out of itself, breathing radiantly with life.

10) **Mono**, *Hymn to the Immortal World* (Temporary Residence): The Japanese instrumental post-rock crew displays the musical deftness it has accumulated within 10 years of existence with a distillation of everything that's great with the genre.

BRETT CALLWOOD

1) **Cheap Trick**, *The Latest* (Cheap Trick): Easily the best album they've put their name to in 20 years, thanks to some of their catchiest songs yet and

FOLLOW US ON...





wondrous guitar work from Rick Nielsen. *The Latest* is a welcome return to form.

2) **New York Dolls**, *Cause I Sez So* (Atco/Rhino): Johnny Thunders, Jerry Nolan and Killer Kane may be dead, but the Dolls are very much alive and still kicking the asses of bands a fraction of David Johansen's age, especially with this disc. As *MT*'s Brian Smith said in his July review: "This is the Dolls *now* and *Cause I Sez So* is one of the year's best albums."

3) **The Wildhearts**, *Chutzpah!* (Indie Europe / Zoom): The greatest British rockers of the last two decades deliver yet another great one, mixing barbed wire with banana pudding to create an album that's as caustic as it is irresistible. Ginger and his rowdy crew just don't know how to put out a bad record.

4) **They Never Sleep**, *Mother Nature Sings Her Lullaby* (Mad Queen): Mike Hard and Karen "Queen Bee" Neal continue where they left off in *Thrall* with an album that is volatile and exciting in equal measures. They're better live than on record — but there still isn't one bad song on their debut.

5) **Sonic Youth**, *The Eternal* (Matador): The "Youth" aren't exactly young anymore. But they still managed to release an album that, while no *Daydream Nation*, confirms their standing as one of the most enjoyably fascinating art rock or punk rock (your call!) bands on the planet.

6) **Luder**, *Sonoluminescence* (Small Stone): The remarkably consistent Small Stone Records squeezed in this release just as the year drew to a close. Sue Lott's voice lends an ethereal, Portishead-esque air to what might have otherwise been a fairly standard (but still monstrous) stoner rock album that sounds pretty and yet so hairy at the same time.

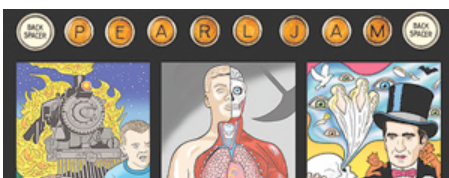
7) **Iggy Pop**, *Preliminaires* (AstralWerks): The Stooges were going through a highly publicized transition following Ron Asheton's tragic passing when Iggy, rather bizarrely, crooned his way through this album of New Orleans-style ballads and other pop jazz forms, occasionally sung in French. Proof positive that Ig will only do things on his terms, but he'll usually do them well.

8) **The Decks**, *Breath and Bone* (Tortoise): These local youngsters fuse the fire of Detroit garage rock with the sunshiny melody of Beach Boys-esque California pop. God bless 'em because there isn't one filler on this debut album, which should see them raise their local profile during the coming year.

9) **Novada**, *Transmission* (456): The Arcade Fire and the Killers may be the current hipster darlings, but these local lads are producing some damn inspiring, emotive and arty noises of their own. 2010 promises to be a big year for them as well, if there's any justice.

10) **The Slits**, *Trapped Animal* (Narnack): The comeback album from the British punky-reggae girls, led by the inimitable Ari Up (step-daughter of Johnny Rotten), didn't disappoint those who have been spinning their debut *Cut* since first hearing it in the early '80s. Danceable party punk at it's finest.

SERENE DOMINIC





SEE ALSO

MORE FROM METRO TIMES MUSIC STAFF

Slip 'em a disc (11/25/2009)

DVDs, CDs, box sets and reissues to give — if only to yourself

The Music Issue (11/11/2009)

The New Class: Snapshots from the recession, or what's new and how to win in 2010

Sloppy seconds (7/1/2009)

This year's Cityfest features a day of "second chances."

David Lynch, Iggy Pop, Frank Black and Julian Casablancas.

4) **Grizzly Bear**, *Veckatimest* (Warp Records): Best chamber pop by far this year, though I must confess I liked "While You Wait for the Others" even more when Michael McDonald sang it on the single's B-side!

5) **The Dead Weather**, *Horehound* (Third Man): The year's *other* Queens of the Stone Age-related supergroup may have had bigger star power, but this one had even better songs. You've gotta love any album that starts out channeling the ghost of Queen's "Get Down Make Love" and keeps going up from there. A side project that should take center stage.

6) **Muse**, *The Resistance* (Warner Brothers): Speaking of channeling the ghost of Queen, this record sounds as if Thom Yorke exhumed Freddie Mercury and tried coming up with a better posthumous album than *Made in Heaven*.

7) **Lee Fields & the Expressions**, *My World* (Truth & Soul): Discovering this album is like reaching back into the couch cushions during a vigorous make-out session and finding a Bobby Womack album you didn't even know existed.

8) **The Decemberists**, *The Hazards of Love* (Capitol): I've had a love-hate relationship with this one all year. "Love" because it rocks as often as it folks; "hate" because I'm not sure bringing back the prog rock concept album is all that good an idea.

9) **Phoenix**, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* (Glass Note): You can point to Obama's 2009 Inauguration as the starting point where our country put our national nightmare (otherwise known as the Bush administration) behind us. But how about our electing a French pop band to do the music for the 2010 Cadillac SRX commercial?

10) **Tech N9ne**, *Sickology 101* (Strange Music): This rap collaboration album had it all — the sickest boasts and most rapid-fire spitting, particularly from the Midwest Choppers. But it also had the funniest in-between song skits, including the running one where Tech N9ne, Cutt Kalhoun and Krizz Kaliko all lose the Song of the Year Grammy to a fictional rap group called the 816 Boys who have a novelty rap song about a woman's "Areola."

HOBEBY ECHLIN

1) **Mayer Hawthorne**, *A Strange Arrangement* (Stones Throw): It made sense that the whole Winehouse et al. retro-soul thing would come back to Detroit, and even more perfect that it did so in the form of an Ann Arbor hip-hop honky.

2) **Various Artists**, *Downriver Revival* (Numero): A Ford engineer builds a home studio and homemade lapsteel to record fellow churchgoers and factory workers with a vision of a gospel pop empire that fails like a Robert Frank photograph. Great story, but the disc is better. Kid Rock, you need to cover "What Happens to People?" You're welcome.

3) **Hush**, *The Open Book* (Self Released): While the rest of Detroit hip-hop upheld the Umma/Dilla legacy and Em maintained his Jay-Z holding pattern, Hush resurrected his broken career with an album of finale-montage-soundtrack-hop that made him Detroit's Gang Starr.

4) **Dam Funk**, *To Eachizown* (Stones Throw): Prince in dub; DJ Quik in dubber; Carl Craig in dubbest.

1) **Neko Case**, *Middle Cyclone* (Anti-): This is the lady the pop world should have been all gaga for in 2009.

Case crammed more poetry, hooks and killer pull quotes into this record than anyone else dared to this year, while having the finesse to cover Sparks and Nilsson on the same record and make 'em both sound they were hers to begin with.

2) **Dirty Projectors**, *Bitte Orca* (Domino): When I was a little urchin listening to Modern Rock Radio, this is what I hoped "Modern Rock" in the future would sound like. I like to imagine that leader Dave Longstreth records songs, plays them backwards, learns to sing them phonetically and records them forward to make English sound like a foreign language

3) **Dangermouse and Sparklehorse** *Present Dark Night of the Soul* (self released): When EMI dropped the ball on arguably the coolest record of 2009, Dangermouse and Sparklehorse released an art book of the album with a blank CD-R and let the illegal file sharers thumb their noses back at the corporate buzz kills in big style. Standout guests include Flaming Lips,

- 5) **Etienne Jaumet**, *Entropy* EP (Versatile Records): In a year that saw club-hop reinvented as trance-circa-'99 4:4 stompers, quality techno with solid hooks and mystery seemed a tall order — which Jaumet served up superbly with a drizzle of classic Detroit.
- 6) **Deastro**, *Grower* EP (Ghostly): The sound of joy, innocence, excitement, and happy confusion of my youth all speaking in tongues at once. *Sigh*. ...
- 7) **Nomo**, *Invisible Cities* (Ubiquity): Producer Warren Defever opened up the Afro-beat jazz funk head cheese that is Nomo to capture the band at its most live and loose.
- 8) **El Michels Affair**, *Enter the 37th Chamber* (Truth & Soul/Fat Beats): Eff that *Muppet Show* cast of emcees and punch lines, this straight-faced jazz-band take on the Wu-Tang Clan canon shows RZA's dusted but crisp beats are the real legacy of Shaolin.
- 9) **Black Moth Super Rainbow**, *Eating Us* (Graveface): Grizzly Bear and Animal Collective can have their earbud chamber pop and leave the big-ass '70s stoner headphones to BMSR.
- 10) **Pelican**, *What We All Come to Need* (Southern Lord): If you were only going to listen to one hope-for-a-doomed-world post-everything all-instrumental metal record of '09, this was the one. Like Swans' *Burning World* crossed with Muse, but too good to be bothered with vocals.

TIM GRIERSON

- 1) **Yeah Yeah Yeahs**, *It's Blitz!* (Interscope): You remember that one amazing night you went out to the club, got drunk, met that guy, fell in love, got your heart broken, and wouldn't have changed a second of it? Yeah Yeah Yeahs do too.
- 2) **Phoenix**, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* (V2): This year's *Vampire Weekend* — a marvelously ingratiating record that so deeply ingrains itself into the background of your daily life that it feels like a second skin.
- 3) **The Lonely Island**, *Incredibad* (Universal Republic): The jokes never get old — more amazingly, neither do the hooks.
- 4) **The Decemberists**, *The Hazards of Love* (Capitol): I still can't decipher this album's rock-opera narrative — the inexhaustible music keeps getting in the way.
- 5) **Moby**, *Wait for Me* (Mute): My God, is this lovely. And so very sad.
- 6) **Mos Def**, *The Ecstatic* (Downtown): Like on his underappreciated *The New Danger*, he's made an album that feels like a movie — specifically, an enigmatic foreign film that requires repeat viewings to unravel its many brilliant layers.
- 7) **The Thermals**, *Now We Can See* (Kill Rock Stars): Yes, their last album was more overtly political. But writing about choosing to live (and die) fully can be political, too.
- 8) **Brad Paisley**, *American Saturday Night* (Arista Nashville): An emotional, populist record that, in its own way, captures the temperament of the country as perfectly as *Born in the U.S.A.* did 25 years ago. Plus, relationship songs to die for.
- 9) **Green Day**, *21st Century Breakdown* (Reprise): The confusion of modern times expressed by a guy who's no smarter than you or me but does know a little something about songwriting.
- 10) **Handsome Furs**, *Face Control* (Sub Pop): A panic attack set to electro-rock. Or a rocky-marriage album that Richard and Linda Thompson would have been proud to make.

CHRIS HANDYSIDE

- 1) **Neko Case**, *Middle Cyclone* (Anti-): Record of the year, hands down. I've been listening to this record nonstop since it arrived and I still fail to find a flaw in Case's wrangling of the wild. *Sigh*.
- 2) **Nomo**, *Invisible Cities* (Ubiquity): Travel around the world without ever leaving your own head or get your mind blown by this travelogue of world sounds. Either way, win-win.
- 3) **Art Brut**, *Art Brut vs. Satan* (Downtown): "Slapdash for No Cash" is the kind of music I like. Sorta like *The Fall for Dummies*.
- 4) **Animal Collective**, *Merriwether Post Pavillion* (Domino): So many new sounds, fresh tones, warm jets and summer sunsets. Their enormous popularity hasn't dulled this record one bit.
- 5) **Daniel "Lazrus"**, *Moodgadget* (self-released): Gorgeous haikus from the beating electronic heart. An impressionistic diamond in the rough.
- 6) **Wilco**, *Wilco (The Album)* (Nonesuch): Go figure. A dude like me accepting the approach of middle

age digging a grower of a record by an adventurous band grown comfortable in its own skin. Huh? Weird.

- 7) **Office, Mecca** (Quack! Media): Short, bittersweet and full of the kind of soaring hooks and melodies that make you miss Pas/Cal just a little less for at least 30 minutes.
- 8) **Mayer Hawthorne, A Strange Arrangement** (Stones Throw): Sure, the original version of "Just Ain't Gonna Work Out" is a dustier jam, but Mayer Hawthorne threw open another gateway-drug stash of indie-soul grooves that's plain old irresistible.
- 9) **Death, ...For the Whole World to See** (Drag City): I've foisted this record on more people this year than any other. The universal response is the same as my initial one: "Fuck, yeah! Where the hell did *this* come from?!"
- 10) **The Gories, Reunion Show** (Majestic Theatre): No, it's not an album (though I did dig up a bootleg of their live back-in-the-day *Houseparty* recording to prep for the occasion). Still, the return of the Gories was sloppy, celebratory, flawed, loud, genius and absosmurfly perfect.

W. KIM HERON

- 1) **Vijay Iyer Trio, Historicity** (ACT): One of the most exciting pianists of the last decade (and with one of his well-honed outfits) is an energized avant populist, deconstructing *West Side Story's* "Somewhere," paying homage to Andrew Hill, slamming through MIA's "Galang," and translating Julius Hemphill's "Dogon AD."
- 2) **Fly, Sky and Country** (ECM): Saxophonist Mark Turner, bassist Larry Grenadier and drummer Jeff Ballard live up to the buzz generated by their 2004 debut and years of live gigs. Accomplished musicians individually, their group dynamic is uniquely spry, intriguing, inviting. Great disc by a great group.
- 3) **Burnt Sugar, Making Love to the Dark Ages** (LiveWired): This is middle of the road for Burnt Sugar, which is to say between their most song-form-oriented (relatively speaking) and their most formed-before-your-ears improv-oriented material (absolutely speaking). A raucous Arkestra-sized group (on most cuts) for which the distance between background and foreground is more often than not minimized.
- 4) **Steve Lehman Octet, Travail, Transformation, and Flow** (Pi): At any given moment (to oversimplify a tad), four of five horns (including alto saxophonist Lehman) are deployed to create clouds of luminous harmony that float between a darting soloist on the top and the churning rhythm section (bass, drum, vibes) below. Lehman's definitely onto something, and it isn't just architecture.
- 5) **Miguel Zenon, Esta Plana** (Marsalis Music): The alto saxophonist — and, like Ran Blake, one of the handful of jazz musicians with a MacArthur genius grant — brings *plena*, a folk sound of his native Puerto Rico, into jazz. The chattering pulses and propulsive force of the *plenas* — the term refers to the style and the hand drums that are essential — are brought into a deep synthesis with the jazz elements.
- 6) **Ran Blake, Driftwoods** (Tompkins Square): Jazz tunes are often referred to as vehicles because they're so often about going somewhere. For Blake, the tunes of his beloved singers — from Billie Holiday and Mahalia Jackson to Hank Williams — are old houses to get lost in. The sustain pedal is this solo pianist's special friend.
- 7) **Gerald Wilson, Detroit** (Mack Avenue): A grand old musician of the big band era pays homage to the adopted hometown where he came of age. Recorded with star-laden ensembles in both L.A. and New York.
- 8) **Kenn Cox and Donald Walden, Duet at Kerrytown** (N/A): It's a simple production that doesn't have an official label designation, and it may be a little casual in execution (a little rough, including just two of their originals). But it documents two much-missed Detroit voices in sympathetic conversation. Both were Monk-ophiles, and the three tunes of Monk's here are justification enough.
- 9) **The Bad Plus, For All I Care** (Heads Up): For this listener, Wendy Lewis' droll vocals took ages to warm up to, but effects like Ethan Iverson's splattered piano on Nirvana's "Lithium" were grabbers from the get-go. And, months later, this piano trio-plus-vocals disc — with its Ives to the Bee Gees eclecticism — seems all of a piece.
- 10) **Henry Threadgill Zooid, This Brings Us To, Vol. 1** (Pi): The boundary-pushing of Threadgill's first release in eight years (and his second with an edition of Zooid) seems to be more about process than product; it's more intriguing than viscerally satisfying. But what process and intrigue!

MICHAEL HURTT

- 1) **Vince Taylor, Jet Black Leather Machine** (Ace Records): Vince Taylor was Britain's 1950s answer to Gene Vincent, teetering on the brink of rock 'n' roll insanity belting out his now-classic "Brand New Cadillac," later popularized by the Clash. When David Bowie, who modeled Ziggy Stardust alter ego on Taylor, met his idol in the late '60s, he was donning white robes, claiming to be Jesus Christ, but still

rocking with schizophrenic abandon.

2) **Various Artists**, *Fire in My Bones* (Tompkins Square): Leave it to the label that released the award-winning *People Take Warning! Murder Ballads and Disaster Songs 1913-1938* compilation to cherry pick an 80-track, triple-disc tour-de-force of the most stirring, small-label black gospel recorded between 1944 and 2007, and unleash it on an unsuspecting public. A truly underground music essential.

3) **Various Artists**, *Designer Records Presents "Together"* (Big Legal Mess): Designer Records was a custom gospel label that released more than 500 singles in its 10-year history. As an indication of the quality of its music, most of them were as good — if not better — than anything on *Fire In My Bones*. Jerry Lee Lewis' Sun Records-era guitarist, Roland Janes, recorded most of these groups at his Sonic Studio.

4) **Various Artists**, *Memphis 60* (BGP): There's something about the unvarnished spirit of anarchic music that's long been recorded in Memphis, be it Detroit bluesman Eddie Kirkland hollering maniacally into his harmonica microphone on "The Hawg" or Mississippi counterpart Junior Kimbrough (recording as "Junior Kimbell") turning in a filthy, garage funk rendition of Lowell Fulson's "Tramp." This focuses on the grittiest undercurrents of a celebrated musical city.

5) **Various Artists**, *Downriver Revival* (Numero Group): Ecorse was another on that list of uncelebrated musical cities until the Numero Group sought out gospel steel guitarist Felton Williams and his Revival imprint for this compilation. Williams' basement sessions were bolstered by guitar master James "Blood" Ulmer and sacred steel wizard Calvin Cooke, utilizing styles from garage punk to northern soul to hillbilly gospel and the strange subgenres that fall between. The documentary DVD alone is worth the price of admission.

6) **Dex Romweber Duo**, *Ruins of Berlin* (Bloodshot): For decades, guitar-picking crooner Dexter Romweber has been blazing a trail of southern gothic genius, first with his Georgia two-piece, the Flat Duo Jets (a Jack White favorite), then solo, and currently with sister, Sara, accompanying him on drums. Featuring gorgeous duets with Neko Case and Cat Power, *Ruins of Berlin* is perhaps his finest effort — a highly emotional stew of bohemian rockabilly, gypsy guitar instrumentals and heartbreakingly beautiful vocals and songwriting.

7) **Benny Joy**, *Crash the Party: The Benny Joy Story 1957-61* (Norton Records): What Dex Romweber is to Jack White, Benny Joy is to Dex as well as countless others long stricken with the Joy fever — from Memphis iconoclast Tav Falco to Brooklyn rocker Billy Miller, who compiled this three disc anthology of one of rock 'n' roll's most elusive enigmas. It's about time this one-of-a-kind wild man got a box set!

8) **Lyman Woodard**, *Saturday Night Special* (Wax Poetics Records): Detroit organist Lyman Woodard's LP has long suffered from sonic compromise, as its grooves would've sounded better spread out over a double album. This reissue — with liner notes by John Sinclair — brings some justice. Detroit mood music doesn't get any better than this soundtrack of downtown's legendary Pick-Fort Shelby Hotel scene, circa '74.

9) **The Rationals**, *Think Rational!* (Big Beat Records): For years, rock 'n' roll fans have talked in hushed tones of the Rationals' legendary 1968 *Fan Club* LP, an unreleased album waxed by these Ann Arbor soul rockers before their later, more successful offerings. Among 20 previously unreleased tracks, the lost album is finally shown the light of day on this two disc set, complete with a killer booklet.

10) **Various Artists**, *Virginia Rocks! The History of Rockabilly in the Commonwealth* (JSP): Very few compilations can lay claim to the honor of seamlessly sequencing Link Wray with Wayne Newton, but such is the twisted secret history of Virginia rock 'n' roll. Such country stalwarts as Roy Clark and Patsy Cline also make appearances, alongside cult artists, on this exhaustive 61-track companion to the acclaimed museum exhibit of the same name.

WILLIAM E. KETCHUM III

1) **Blitz the Ambassador**, *Stereotype* (Embassy MVMT): The best rap album of the year came from Blitz the Ambassador, an emcee from the West African country of Ghana. His authoritative flow and profoundly detailed narratives about love, political injustice and culture shine, though it's robust soundbeds from producer Optiks and live band Hypnotic Brass Ensemble that make this larger than life.

2) **Diamond District**, *In the Ruff* (Mello Music Group): Eager to relay the untold story of their DMV — the central point between Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia — stomping grounds, this astonishing trio pairs nimble, relatable rhymes with nostalgic boom-bap production.

3) **Finale, A Pipe Dream and a Promise** (Interdependent Media): Armed with an intense, soft-spoken delivery and a roster of some of the best indie producers around, Detroit's Finale uses *A Pipe Dream and a Promise* to spit personal rhymes about family, struggle and self-preservation with unbridling honesty.

4) **Mos Def**, *The Ecstatic* (Downtown Records): Mos Def doesn't let critics or fans define his artistry, and with *The Ecstatic*, that's a good thing. His poetic lyrics, varied soundbeds and short songs seem all over

the place, but he holds them together to create hip hop's comeback album of the year.

5) **Royce Da 5'9"**, *Street Hop* (One Records): After years of pushbacks and leaks, Detroit emcee Royce Da 5'9" finally dropped his long-awaited LP with DJ Premier. Detailed concepts and storylines, brash cockiness and a capable guest list make *Street Hop* Royce's best album yet.

6) **Kid Cudi**, *Man on the Moon: The End of Day* (Universal Motown Records): Kid Cudi can barely rap himself out of a paper bag. But catchy melodies, moving production, impeccable sequencing and an emotional delivery add up to still make this one of the most memorable debuts of the past five years.

7) **Raekwon**, *Only Built 4 Cuban Linx II* (Ice H2o Records): The sequel to his seminal debut album was a long time coming, but with legendary producers and rhymes that sound nearly as crisp as they did more than a decade ago, Raekwon made this disc well worth the wait.

8) **Eminem**, *Relapse* (Aftermath/Interscope): Both new subject matter (late-night killing sprees, getting sodomized by a stepfather) and old topics (issues with Mom) turned off some listeners. But there's no denying the clinic that Eminem conducted on flow, rhyme schemes, imagery and emcee-and-producer chemistry with Dr. Dre along for the ride.

9) **Skyzoo**, *The Salvation* (Jamla Records/Duck Down Music Inc.): Skyzoo may be a new name to many, but his debut album shows wisdom beyond his years. Through vivid narratives and developed concepts, *The Salvation* details the various vices that people depend on to get through hard times.

10) **Rick Ross**, *Deeper Than Rap* (Def Jam): Exposure as a former corrections officer and a manufactured rift with 50 Cent turned off some fans — but Rick Ross still delivered the goods with this album. *Deeper Than Rap* boasts plush production from crews like J.U.S.T.I.C.E. League, and matching rhymes about luxurious living gained through his (fictional) drug trafficking.

CHARLES LATIMER

1) **James Carter**, *Heaven on Earth* (HalfNote Record): This is the third stellar live recording from saxophonist Carter, and he once again proves that he and organist John Medeski are musical soul mates.

2) **Dave Holland, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Chris Potter and Eric Harland**, *The Monterey Quartet: Live at the 2007 Monterey Jazz Festival* (Monterey Jazz Festival Record): The definitive all-star jazz quartet is captured live on this disc, and I've already ruined a pair of my best Sunday shoes because I couldn't stop dancing!

3) **Gerald Wilson**, *Detroit* (Mack Avenue Records): This accomplished big band leader and composer is 91 years old, but he still has the energy and enthusiasm of a young lion.

4) **Jeff "Tain" Watts**, *Watts* (Dark Key Music): I was once convinced that a jazz band couldn't swing without a piano player. Well, I was on my third serving of *Watts* before I realized the piano player was absent!

5) **Matt Wilson**, *That's Gonna Leave a Mark* (Palmetto Records): True to its title, this album left me with many marks — emotional, psychological, all good — and drummer Wilson's thunderous rim shots are still ringing in my ears.

6) **Kenn Cox and Donald Walden**, *Duet at Kerrytown* (N/A): They were jazz royalty, and they bequeathed this gem-recorded to their fans in 1994, though it didn't see release until this year.

7) **Scott Gwinnell Jazz Orchestra**, *Brush Fire* (WSG Records): This is Gwinnell's second big-band offering. And such inspirations as Duke Ellington and Oliver Nelson would've probably loved this recording.

8) **Eric Alexander**, *Revival of the Fittest* (High Note Records): The tenor saxophonist consistently makes great albums, but the ballads on this year's terrific offering is enough to make your soul cry.

9) **Dana Hall**, *Into the Light* (Origin Records): The drummer has built a reputation as top-notch sideman, and his first album as a leader feels something like a coming-out party

10) **Ryan Enderle**, *Triosphere* (Self-released): The jazz bassist created a trio date here that's on par with jazz great Roy Haynes Trio's *We Three*.

BRIAN SMITH

1) **Rickie Lee Jones**, *Balm in Gilead* (Fantasy): Such grace in songs that reward in uncommon ways. "His Jeweled Floor" (with Victoria Williams) is '09's prettiest, saddest song. Plus, Jones' girlish voice (and bangs) continue to defy her years and wisdom.

2) **New York Dolls**, *Cause I Sez So* (Atco/Rhino): It's a mighty long way from Max's Kansas City, but David Jo and the rest of 'em — new and old — are knockin' 'em down in the city with deceptively smart,

hook-saddled rock 'n' roll ditties, the likes of which no one can do anymore, it seems, unless they're wrinkled and wearing glitter hip-huggers.

3) Black Crowes, *Before the Frost* ... (Silver Arrow): It's a mighty long way down rock 'n' roll too, and the Black Crowes mine the Little Feat, Band, Pie and weed *veta madre* with open-tuned harmony, volume and an odd brotherly kinship. The Crowes are far too good now at what they do so it's far too late for anything else, a wry sentiment cheekily winked at on the opener "Good Morning Captain."

4) Lily Allen, *It's Not Me, It's You* (Capitol): Punk as fuck in its mouthy 'tude and personal truths, but also singsong pop in its jazz and swing and country and dance, and killer couplets like "I'm not trying to say that I'm smelling of roses/But when will we tire of putting shit up our noses?"

5) Bobby Emmett, *Learning Love* (self-released) Hard to believe onetime Sights *wonderkind* taught himself guitar to write, play and record a full-on pop album. And it ain't just pop, it's a downright sugar high. Emmett drips of the same anti-macho sensitivity — which the little girls understand — that doomed careers of countless popsters, from Big Star to Shoes to the Rooks, and he enlists pals from Sloan, Deadstring Brothers and the Inside Outlaws to help.

6) Matt Jones, *The Black Path* (Matt Jones): Jones' music reveals odd, if not elegant, twists on pop clichés — an unpredictable waltz thing here, unexpected film soundscape there. This "folky" album unfolds in untold grace and beauty, of regret without redemption, like life. Parts feel like narcotics too, but in that good way — one step up from a dreamy wine high.

7) Marvin Gaye, *What's Going On* (Mobile Fidelity — gold CD/SACD reissue): Another audiophile gold CD reissue that you don't need to be an audiophile to completely get lost in. Old Gaye never sounded so effortless, down to his slight exhales and whispers, and the Funk Brothers never sounded so ... um, what's the word? ... *close*.

8) Lee Fields & the Expressions, *My World* (Truth and Soul): Eee-yow, a proper soul record in '09, and, no, it ain't Mayer Hawthorne. Fields may have hit some killer indie sides back in the '70s, but Al Green and Arthur Alexander's would have absolutely nothin' on him now.

9) Echo and the Bunnymen, *The Fountain* (Ocean Rain Records): The comeback of the decade! The pomp and grandeur is smoother now, less self-impressed and, at times, broken. It's as if Ian McCulloch's regret is now authentic somehow and fueled on countless pub pints, instead of imagined by a 23-year-old burdened by a festering Messianic Complex.

10) Neko Case, *Middle Cyclone* (Anti-): For every 1,000 albums released you get one that should've been made. The others are crap. Period. Neko Case songs always *feel* necessary.

THE WONDER TWINS TOP 10

D'ANNE WITKOWSKI'S TOP 5:

1) **Deastro, *Moondagger*** (Ghostly International): Not to be confused with *Moondreamers*, that weird late '80s cartoon, Deastro's first proper full-length was a dream come true for fans. Though it has to be said: Nothing on here tops "Sprite," which is by far the best song of the year.

2) **Choir of Young Believers, *This Is for the White in Your Eyes*** (Ghostly International): No, not a bunch of Mormons — but, basically, a dude from Denmark with his friends. Think Fleet Foxes crossed with Arcade Fire on Quaaludes. What is it about those Nordic folks and their dreamy sad folk-pop? My drug of choice.

3) **Telekinesis!, *Telekinesis!*** (Merge): You could send your credit card number to a quack on the Internet who claims they can teach you to move objects with your mind. Or you could fill your brain with the power pop goodness of Telekinesis!, which has much more in common with Cheap Trick than cheap tricks.

4) **Pearl Jam, *Backspacer*** (Monkeywrench): Pearl Jam's *Ten* is what saved me from a teenage hair-metal addiction. It was an introduction to rock 'n' roll with more heart, brains, and angst — and *Backspacer* reminds me of what I originally loved about this band oh-so-many years ago.

5) **Casiotone for the Painfully Alone, *Vs. Children*** (Tomlab): After seven years playing clarinet in the school band, I can only play a rudimentary version of "When the Saints Go Marching In." And on CFTPA's new record, his song "Optimist vs. The Silent Alarm (When the Saints Go Marching In)" proves it wasn't all for naught after all.

LAURA WITKOWSKI'S TOP 5 DETROIT ALBUMS

1) **Zoos of Berlin, *Taxis*** (self-released): It sounds so wrong to say the best album out of Detroit this year doesn't sound at all like something from Detroit, but, instead, something from 1970s Berlin. Nevertheless, *Taxis* is in a class by itself, completely outside of the trends and sounds of the city.

- 2) **Deastro**, *Moondagger* (Ghostly International): Direct message to Randy Chabot: *Moondagger* is awesome and speaks volumes about your talent. There's no need for all the live gimmicks and finger-paint messes. It's about the music — keep your focus there!
- 3) **The Prime Ministers**, *Compromiser* (self-released): Another album of Smithereens-style power pop goodness. Give *Compromiser* a listen and then just try to get songs like "We Are the Reward" out of your head.
- 4) **Copper Thieves**, *From Way Out to Way Under* (Jack Holmes Recording Company): A '90s indie, working-class '70s rock sound and catchy songs about having fights and trying to get shit figured out. So, in other words, pretty classic Detroit.
- 5) **Office**, *Mecca* (Quack! Media): I've always been a sucker for Britpop, and Office crafts pop tunes like an unsung, late-90s contemporary of Blur.

TRAVIS R. WRIGHT

- 1) **Grizzly Bear**, *Veckatimest* (Warp Records): As ethereal as past efforts, *Veckatimest* is noticeably more patient — shit, call it mature if you want — than previous efforts. It's also the most melodic record of the year. I got lost inside of it and didn't want to find my way out.
- 2) **Yeah Yeah Yeahs**, *It's Blitz* (Interscope): For these New York noisemakers, *It's Blitz* saw the band merge lanes in 2009, speeding down the fastest one they could find like a pop kamikaze, strapped with head-bop hooks and thick synths. Karen O proves more badass than Madonna ever was.
- 3) **The Silent Years**, *Let Go* (SideCho): *Let Go* was a dense, moody carnival of melody. It's a small bomb of music that explodes all around us and a camouflaged juggernaut bulldozing a shit-ton of personal baggage — a tissue in one hand, and a sword in the other.
- 4) **Phoenix**, *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* (Loyauté/Glassnote): Pristine production smoothed out and funk-ed up a record that unabashedly displays vocalist Thomas Mars' sick sensibility of pop. Try not to sing along, I dare you.
- 5) **Mos Def**, *The Estatic* (Downtown): Finally, the Mighty Mos Def came out with a record that can be mentioned in the same sentence with his 1999 debut, *Black on Both Sides*. With beats by Oh No, Madlib and Dilla, the undeniable single, "Life in Marvelous Times," found its way onto most every playlist I made in '09.
- 6) **Antony & the Johnsons**, *The Crying Light* (Secretly Canadian): Antony Hegarty has one of the most interesting voices in all of modern music — but it's not just his natural reverberating weep that makes *Crying Light* so powerful. The instrumentation of this record is as smartly executed as Hegarty's pen. This LP has real staying power.
- 7) **Animal Collective**, *Merriwether Post Pavilion* (Domino): These guys got way too much hype in 2009, and it's all because of this record. It doesn't suck, but (like the Dead Weather's *Horehound*) it should've been an EP. Still, there are some irrefutable jams, such as "Daily Routine" and "My Girls," the latter being my favorite single of '09.
- 8) **Dirty Projectors**, *Bitte Orca* (Domino): You know those records you can listen to over and over and over and, whether washing dishes, driving to a Friday night show or working in the cube, it always seems like the right time to throw it on and turn it up? Yeah, for me, this bright and acoustic record —with its sweeping flock of melodies and herd of driving rhythms — was *that* record.
- 9) **Amadou & Mariam**, *Welcome to Mali* (Nonesuch): With a little help from Blur/Gorillaz guru Damon Albarn (see the single, "Sabali"), *Welcome to Mali* is a snow-melting assortment of sounds: We hear Balkan strings, south American horns, Indian *tablas* and enough Afro-pop energy to get you through to April. With deep bass and Amadou's lead guitar it's as funk-bluesy as anything made in '09.
- 10) **Pearl Jam**, *Backspacer* (Monkeywrench): Hated this record the first five times I heard it. Then I realized the old grunge bunch are in their mid-40s and that the things they have to say and the way they want to say them just reflect their age and temperament. What we get is straightforward rock 'n' roll and, with tracks like "Just Breathe," some of Ed Ved's most sincere work in years.

COMMENT ON THIS ARTICLE

Leave a comment on this article.

User:

Password:

[Submit](#) [Reset](#)

By posting a message, you agree to our [Posting Policies](#) [No account? New users sign up here.](#)
[Forgot your password?](#)

News

- [News+Views](#)
- [Politics & Prejudices](#)
- [News Hits](#)
- [Stir It Up](#)
- [Comics](#)

Blogs

- [Music Blahg](#)
- [News Blawg](#)
- [Reckless Eyeballing](#)
- [The B-Roll](#)
- [Blowout Blog](#)

Best of Detroit

- [Best of Detroit 2009](#)
- [Best of Map](#)

Music

- [Music Homepage](#)
- [Search Local Music](#)
- [Enter Musician](#)
- [Music Events](#)

Arts

- [Arts Homepage](#)
- [Book Reviews](#)

Culture

- [Culture Homepage](#)
- [Savage Love](#)
- [Motor City Cribz & Rides](#)

Screens

- [Screens Homepage](#)
- [Film Vault](#)
- [Couch Trip](#)
- [Idiot Boxing](#)

Events

- [Highlights](#)
- [Search Calendar Events](#)
- [Enter Calendar Event](#)

Food

- [Food Homepage](#)
- [Find a Restaurant](#)
- [Enter a Restaurant](#)

Clubs

- [Find a Club](#)
- [Add a Club](#)

Web

- [MT Newsletter](#)
- [MT@Facebook](#)
- [MT@MySpace](#)
- [MT@Flickr](#)
- [MT@Twitter](#)
- [MT@Youtube](#)

Archives

- [Search Archives](#)
- [Search Authors](#)
- [Search Issues](#)
- [Latest Comments](#)

Classified

- [Classified Home](#)
- [Place Ad](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Services](#)
- [Stuff For Sale](#)
- [Massage](#)
- [Personals](#)
- [Adult](#)

Automotive

- [Cars, Trucks+More](#)
- [Services](#)

Real Estate

- [Real Estate](#)
- [For Rent](#)
- [Roommates](#)

Contact Us

- [About us](#)
- [Staff Directory](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [National Advertising](#)
- [Work Here](#)

Metro Times Stuff

- [Win Free Stuff](#)
- [Velvet Rope Photos](#)
- [Event Photos](#)

RSS Feed

- [XML](#) [Full Feed](#)

© 2010 Metro Times

Learn > Artist Management, Negotiation, Media Publishing
Brand Development

Entertainment Business

Master's Degree Online

FULL SAIL UNIVERSITY Online

GET INFO

www.FullSail.edu

Ads by Google