

CD REVIEWS

FEATURED REVIEW



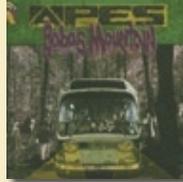
EELS
Blinking Lights and Other Revelations
 (vagrant records)
 ★★★★★

Mark Oliver Everett's musical avatar Eels has always been known for its depressive sound, and the new double CD *Blinking Lights and Other Revelations* continues in this vein with a new emphasis on ethereal production. The record presents a varied sweep of lyrical and musical interpretations on the themes of loss and loneliness. The second disc begins to develop a more hopeful sound, but even the lighter moments such as "Losing Streak" seem to be delivered with a self-conscious irony supported by the return to melancholy by album's end. A theme reminiscent of Jon Brion's recent work scoring films such as *I Heart Huckabees*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, and *Punch-Drunk Love* provides a recurring departure point for the genre jumping Everett does throughout the record. The fundamental sound is still simple guitar and piano balladry, but the tongue-in-cheek crowd noise and sampled handclaps on the garage freakout "Goin' Fetal" and the swirling psych-pop of "Old Shit/New Shit" are notable examples of Everett's genre-bending. Although most of high points of the album are these departures, the remaining songs are by no means filler; this is that rare contemporary double-album that deserves its length. There is an album-wide flow and texture here that gives the album a timeless quality that most contemporary albums miss with their focus on encapsulated singles.



FOR THOSE WHO KNOW
SELF-TITLED EP
 (christmas mountain records)
 ★★★★★

Locals For Those Who Know's self-titled debut EP shows that they deserve to be noted among those fueling Austin's ongoing indie rock revival. Blending British post-punk and new wave influences such as Joy Division with the full tone of American bands of the late-80's/early-90's such as the Pixies, For Those Who Know's sound is quietly dense, layering loud, full guitars with hushed vocals to create a soft beauty. On point and creative drum tracks consistently drive the music forward, with the off-kilter beat of "Perfect" being the album's high point in this regard. "Night At The Danceclub" and "Grow Old Together And Die" will likely be the two standout tracks, each being more representative of a different branch of the band's influences.



APES
BABA'S MOUNTAIN
 (birdman records)
 ★★★★★

The Apes from Washington, D.C. have built their reputation on making more noise than a guitar-less band ought to be able to. Live, the plodding thrust of their organ-driven psych-metal sound has stayed just as loud and just as powerful, but, in the studio, they have slowly been experimenting with a higher production level and more studio effects. The current pinnacle of this development can be heard on their new release *Baba's Mountain*. The noise is still there, but it is now cloaked in full-on psych regalia. The album presents an overarching narrative that takes the listener on a tour of *Baba's Mountain* a place inhabited by such creatures as complicated squirrels and molting exercise crabs. Layered keys and vocal effects round out the brooding creepiness to produce the most engaging record of the Apes' career.



RYAN ADAMS AND THE CARDINALS
COLD ROSES
 (lost highway)
 ★★★★★

The first of three scheduled full-length releases for 2005, Ryan Adams' double CD *Cold Roses* revisits the country sound of his Whiskeytown days that was largely absent in his two major releases of the last few years, *Gold* and *Rock N Roll*. As usual, Adams could have been more disciplined in editing himself here. There is a single CD worth of great material here interspersed among filler that is palatable, but not particularly inspired. "Magnolia Mountain" sets the tone for the album with a shimmering melancholy that is reminiscent of the high production California roots-rock of early 70's Grateful Dead or Relatively Clean Rivers. "Cherry Lane" represents the album at its best, as Adams jumps back and forth between an updated country-rock sound and his best Hank Williams impersonation.

DVD REVIEWS

RATING SYSTEM

★ TO ★★★★★



THE AVIATOR
 dir: Martin Scorsese
 (Warner Bros.)
 ★★★★★

With *The Aviator*, Martin Scorsese continues his fascination with finding surprising intrigue in period pieces. This iteration is likely his most successful effort in this regard, playing the public glamour and private machinations of the era's Hollywood off of Howard Hughes' public success and private trauma. Leonardo DiCaprio deftly jumps between Hughes' two personas; eschewing the temptation to overact his madness with a subtle, insightful aloofness. Where, for example, *Gangs of New York* distracts from the source material with excessive style; *The Aviator* understands the style of its setting while maintaining an honest presentation. The same can be said for its presentation of its central character; a man deserving of both admiration and reproach, sympathy and distance. *The Aviator* is the best sort of Hollywood film; one that blends Hollywood elegance with true artistry and insight.



THE LIFE AQUATIC WITH STEVE ZISSOU
 dir: Wes Anderson
 (criterion collection)
 ★★★

The latest release from director Wes Anderson, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* continues his fascination with whimsy and anachronistic artifice. The plot sees underwater documentary filmmaker Steve Zissou (Bill Murray) on a quest to find the shark that killed his partner. His ship, the *Belafonte*, is people with his typical motley assortment of characters; however, these characters lack the humanity of those from previous films. Aside from Bill Murray's nuanced interpretation of his character, this film generally lacks any opportunity for the viewer to make an emotional connection. The settings, costumes, soundtrack, and characters are all remarkable in their own right, but Anderson's omni-present wink is not tempered by deep, human characters the way it has been in previous films. *Steve Zissou* is certainly not his best film, but Anderson's unique vision still may recommend itself when it fails.