

Disagreeable

20 January 2023 | Jonah D, editor-in-chief

What We're listening to:

Album: The Modern Age EP | the Strokes

Ever wondered what a professional high school band would sound like? The finest release from the Strokes will show you their elevator pitch for a major label contract.

Track: Sleep Rules Everything Around Me | Wugazi (Cecil Otter & Swiss Andy)

In the massive field of hilarious-on-their-face mashup albums, you'll be surprised by how well it actually works out. Instead of a punchline, we have a 40 minute DJ set of uniquely intelligent rap-rock.

Track: Nothing To Be Done | the Pastels

Picture-perfect meta-vignette of noise pop with the pop capitalized, rather than the noise. It's impressive how nonchalant the singers are with such a racket happening.

Reviews:

Randy Newman

1968

Randy Newman

Highlights: You and Me, So Long Dad, It's Going To Rain Today

author: Jonah Dayley

I had three different and competing threads in my mind whenever I heard the name Randy Newman for the bulk of my life: the guy who soundtracked Pixar movies (and wrote 'You've Got A Friend In Me'), the writer of the inescapable Clippers anthem 'I Love L.A.' (which could scarcely be more misunderstood), and the spoof version that exists in Family Guy; the man who Sings What He Sees (have to admit that it was funny). Digging into his discogs as a solo artist though, I discovered he isn't any of these things. If I put it as brief as possible, I would say Randy Newman is an unhappy singer-songwriter. I don't mean depressing; he's far too mundane for theatrics. In a similar vein, he lacks angst to an extreme degree. No, Randy Newman is purely unhappy. He lives in a world where it rains, it isn't a metaphor for doom or a

backdrop for a final scream. No, you just get wet. His music also has a deeply unknown quantity to it; which it is certainly Pop in the traditional sense (think Irving Berlin), there's a distinct lack of modern (mid-twentieth century onwards) pop and rock & roll trappings. Rather than a vein you would expect, he breaks from the expected and plays his piano and sings with strings arranged to sound as accidentally timeless as possible.

As far as this album in particular, he covers all his usual (or introduces them). There's songs about never seeing someone again, a song about telling your dad to call before he visits, a song about everyone laughing at a fat boy who's trying really hard; none of them are mean or even angry, Newman just takes a conversational approach to each story as it unfolds. Even the music serves not as a bed for the melody and lyrics, but it also follows the weave of his words, ambling along with him and turning on a time for a tone change. Songs on his first album are also those that are most commonly canonized in the category of songs such as 'Hallelujah', where a ton of people know it and can hum the tune, but very few know where it actually came from originally (Hallelujah is not actually a Jeff Buckley song, but is a Leonard original). For instance, 'It's Going to Rain Today', covered by Dusty Springfield and a handful of other well known versions. The neat thing about Randy Newman, though, is that he remains obscure and interesting enough to this day that he's become infinitely cool. And I'm sure you can get on board with that.

Kerplunk!

1991

Green Day

Highlights: 2000 Light Years Away, One of My Lies, Christie Road

author: textboxers

Without any fanfare Green Day's second album, *Kerplunk*, turned 31 years young immediately before the recent Winter break. People are rediscovering 90's music all over the country, and Green Day's *Dookie* is now a T-shirt you can buy at Target. But before acrid and angst-y anthems like "Basket Case" and "Longview" became hits a younger and more lovesick Green Day sat bored in their Bay Area bedrooms crafting increasingly concise

expressions of their confusion at the world they lived in and frustration with themselves and their suburban peers. Musically, Kerplunk shows a band mimicking their power chord punk and hardcore idols but somehow sounding distinct.

This isn't yet the Green Day you think you know.

Dookie uses volume, apathy, and self-indulgence as weapons against 90s ideals. But Kerplunk is full of giant emotions attempting to inhabit the bodies of the 22 y/o band members and leaping out into guitars and microphones before the next bong hit slows them down. Kerplunk is young punks in love with the women around them, trying to work up the courage to ask them out but putting them on an impossible pedestal and getting stoned instead. Weirder still: they're also gazing into the abyss, pondering the shortness of life and the unknowable infinite, or asking out loud if they'll become the burnout panhandler they see every day. Fortunately they released Dookie shortly after, made millions of dollars, and gave us the awareness we needed to dig this gem out of the back catalog 31 years later and hear it before we got too old to appreciate how well it speaks the yearnings of our young hearts.

New Music:

Endure

2022

Special Interest

8.4

Highlights: Foul, Cherry Blue Intention, LA Blues

author: Jonah Dayley

Miscellaneous word-of-mouth from those around with interesting thoughts have told me Special Interest has a phenomenal live show. Based on what I can ascertain from the space between the beats throughout Endure, I can definitely believe it. Every inch seems to be teeming with explosion on this album. Without overt flattery toward them, or possibly the producer, I can surely say that if they come to town, I'll be there. You can hear it in all the phrasing, the back and forth, the frantic three way screams; these guys are a dance band. Special Interest strikes me as B-52s meet hardcore kids; a group full of members that understand the experience of moshing and dancing as a social melting pot where everyone becomes equals.

I can respect that. The core ideology of Dance! seems to be an all-consuming mission for Special Interest, intent of riling up the club with as much energy and momentum as possible to reach a sweaty and cathartic peak.

That said, there's plenty here I can take issue with.

Among other things, the production and to some extent style of the music can feel a little too clean and sterile, rendering it's cathartic power weakened.

Particular offenders I can think of are Midnight Legend, which feels like I should love it but I never really want to keep listening. It's notably an easier listen than their prior releases, so at least they're heading the right direction. Another note on the album is that the politics are usually very in-your-face, which can work magnificently if landed well, but at various parts throughout makes the album feel a little preachy. Overall, I would have to say that Special Interest is certainly onto something. I don't really feel like it's my scene, but they're certainly going interesting places.

Any review suggestions? New releases from new artists? Want to write for DisagreEeable? Contact us at:

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