

What We're listening to:

Album: Armed Forces | Elvis Costello

This is the 3rd of Elvis Costello's impeccable opening run. The epitome of New Wave as a credible pop form, the whip-sharp lyrics all fall into place with elaborate and ornately constructed hits.

Track: Sinnerman | Nina Simone

I know next to nothing about Nina Simone other than that people mention her a lot. What I do know is that this is a fantastic, fireworks-take of gospel inflected jazz.

Track: California | Lana Del Ray

Who'd of that I'd have such a hot streak this week picking albums based on title alone? Apparently Lana Del Ray doesn't remotely fall into the vacuous pop star bucket I'd originally put her in. In fact, she's quite the opposite, and she's done something really fabulous.

Reviews:

Astral Weeks
1968

Van Morrison

Highlights: Astral Weeks, Madame George,
Cyprus Avenue
Author: Jonah Dayley

I heard this record for the first time in Government class a few days ago. I was looking for something new and exciting, something that could remind me of the days when I would explore new records before I became a jaded critic who'd heard too much. I've loved Van Morrison for a very long time, as he's always been one of my mom's favorite artists, so I just ran with what I had in his direction. What I

found made me stop all work on my essay, close my eyes, and absorb the sound.

Astral Weeks is a very special record indeed. For all the hundreds of sloppy rock records touted as concepts, or designed to be 'a single statement, together', I've scarcely heard any that are as cohesive as this one. To borrow a phrase, the entire album is such a vibe. The album feels a little like Weezer's Pinkerton: a time capsule of a crazy and unique time in Morrison's life that was never repeated, but that any listener can relive in an instant just by putting it on. There's something special in the arrangement and instrumentation of the record.

A possibly true, half myth about Astral Weeks is that after gathering the best session players he could possibly find, Van Morrison brought them all together in the studio and left them to themselves; he didn't introduce himself, he just told them to play what they wanted to play and then entered into a separate booth, alone. You can hear the looseness of a bunch of players who don't know each other fending for themselves, making it up on the fly. Everything sort of sprawls, with proper things such as chord progressions falling into place, but with a mystery as to what will happen next. Between that and the actual production, the record just feels alive in a very whole and complete way. It breathes, it's full of space, change, energy. It's open in a magical way, like the best form of psychedelic pop, the true goal of the genre.

Ultimately, this record is a lonely listen. It's hard for me to imagine listening to it with other people, letting them into the special little place I have where this record now fits in. It's perfect for something, though: passing along to another. It may be personal feelings, but

disagreeEeable

15 February 2023 | Jonah D, editor-in-chief
Distributed by Guerrilla Publishing

they're universal enough that the myth continues to spread. That sure sounds like something I'd want to accomplish.

Flamingo - EP

2020

VEMM

Highlights: Shifty Problems, Speak Up

7.5

Author: Jonah Dayley

I gotta say, there's only one thing I'm really disappointed about in VEMM: they don't sound much like home. I mean, obviously a band doesn't need to make music that's representative of where they're from, under any circumstances. Obviously. But for some reason I just expected it of these guys. Maybe because they're the first Boise band I've ever discovered myself, I really wanted them to be significant. My only consolation is that they have a very high chance of bursting out to something more in the near future.

My favorite thing about them is how tight they sound. Every single bar on every single song is perfectly in time, each instrument overlaid together in a very precise way. It seems like that's just what they're good at too, because that's exactly what they do live. Every little tempo change and flourish is directly in time with every other instrument, giving them the ability to sound way bigger than they actually are.

As far as the music is concerned, there's a lot to break down. VEMM, all over every bio, says they are "happy-sad indie rock. Similar to the Cure" (paraphrased). I really don't see it, though. Instead of full-on gloom or a flurry of synth pop, VEMM seems to be taking a comfortable middle ground that reaches neither extreme of happy or sad and hanging

out in the middle. As far as specific sound goes, it seems to be mostly the 'indie rock' side of the band that really shines though, and this EP is full of what be called 'classic indie rock'. VEMM has a bit of a C86 sound to it, complete with jangle and a delightful touch of fey.

Track by track, there's a lot of variance in quality. Lucky for them, it's their first release (from implication, I'd say they're around 21, 22ish as a whole). What's Next For Me establishes a fair bit of credibility for them right out the gate. Speak Up is their best pop song: short, snappy, and complete with a great riff (love that the bassist sings on it too). Profits, on the other hand, stretches out further than it should and ends up being about the same as the previous two songs, but twice as long. Similarly, Fog gets a little lost in the production and ends up becoming too much like the title suggests. Shifty Problems strikes a nice balance between what Profits could have been and the immediacy of Speak Up. As far as lyrics go, not much seems discernible. With the heavy reverb on the vocals, they mostly fade away. At the very least they seem inoffensive, however. Maybe they're even good, If I listened hard enough to hear them.

Overall, I like VEMM. They're not primed to be my new favorite band, or even one of my favorite releases, but I'm sure I'll keep listening to them occasionally. And I'll totally be at their next show. ☺

Any review suggestions? Heard a new release or new artist? Want to write for DisagreeEable? Contact us at:

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