

from drum-and-bass, breakbeat and soul-jazz with a Fatboy Slim-like sense of the epic—*Diamonds and Death* sounds big and boisterous, but still hews closely to the lo-fi hipster aesthetic that band members **Craig Pfunder** and **Mark Palgy** adopted when moving to Brooklyn in 2009. It doesn't always click—"Eyes" pulses in a compelling *Last Days of Disco* style, while "Under the Sun" plods through retro-house clichés—but Pfunder gives it his all on the mic, and that goes a long way. **Bill Murphy**

Aaron Comess
Beautiful Mistake
HEY BOY MUSIC



Nevermind his role as the drummer of the multi-platinum selling Spin Doctors, **Aaron Comess** has something of his own to say—just not with any words. On his latest solo release, *Beautiful Mistake*, Comess returns with another set of jammy instrumentals that prove to be every bit as catchy as a traditional pop song. Comess' spellbinding melodies—which soar high in his capable hands with the help of bandmates **Teddy Kumpel** (guitar) and **Richard Hammond** (bass)—are fine replacements for traditional lyrics. Swaying from ebullient joyrides ("Beautiful Mistake," "Stinky") to songs that are low, dirty and fit to soundtrack

a backroom brawl ("Dirt," "High Five"), Comess and crew come off like a superjam between Derek Trucks and the Benevento-Russo Duo. With multifaceted, emotive instrumentals, *Beautiful Mistake* should find an eager audience among jam fans. **Fady Khalil**

John Wesley Harding
The Sound of His Own Voice
YEP ROC



John Wesley Harding's a word man. Under his given name, **Wesley Stace**, he's written three well-received novels. So, it isn't a surprise his songs should be so lyrically involved. Love, class struggles, divorce, old love, vague nostalgia and a keen sense of balance and humor (regarding Starbucks!) come through and make up for the fact that his voice isn't much more than mildly expressive. (It was best singing tragic British ballads on *Trad Arr Jones*.) He's loaded his backing band with just about anyone who's someone in the Pacific Northwest, from four members of **The Decemberists** to **Peter Buck** and **Scott McCaughey** of R.E.M. and **Laura Veirs**. It's a pleasant—if unexciting—mix of adult-alternative with the better tunes ("Gentleman Caller," "Calling Off the Experiment") featuring higher-spirited pop grooves. **Rob O'Connor**

Jonny Corndawg
Down on the Bikini Line
NASTY MEMORIES



Authenticity can be a slippery and contested subject in popular music. But it's really beside the point as far as **Jonny Corndawg's** concerned. Does that sound like the stage name of a guy who sweats such things? What you'll find on *Down on the Bikini Line* is affection for country's quirkiest figures of previous decades paired with a deliciously skewed perspective on life, self-deprecating humor and a gift for going out on a limb to entertain. A Waylon Jennings-digging group of indie rockers are backing the Virginia-bred, Brooklyn-based singer/songwriter. And sure, Corndawg has his gimmicky moments, including "When a Ford Man Turns to Chevy." But when he zeroes in on the sort of absurd detail that nobody else would think to write about, he's unbeatable. **Jewly Hight**

Loney, Dear
Hall Music
POLYVINYL



During the course of his first two U.S. releases, Swedish songwriter **Emil Svanängen**, who performs under the pseudonym **Loney, Dear**, jetted across the

spectrum of emotions. While his breakthrough album, *Loney, Noir* dripped with twee harmonies and skipped-through-puddles joy, his next, *Dear John* utilized his soothing falsetto to illustrate despair and despondence. His latest finds a happy medium between the two extremes. Aided by orchestral oddities—oboes, horns and, we swear, a glockenspiel—Svanängen fights the urge to exude gaiety, instead opting for a tempered meditation on life's troubles. "I started to hurt myself," he admits on "Young Hearts." Yet, just as quickly, he's back to looking on the bright side. "No sadness/No disappointment," he insists on "My Heart." Oh, those Swedes and their neutrality.

Dan Hyman

John Scofield
A Moment's Peace
EMARCY/PGD



On **John Scofield's** latest release, *A Moment's Peace*, the master guitarist takes a completely different route than on his groove-oriented collaborations with Medeski Martin & Wood and his recent gospel-tinged album, *Piety Street*. *A Moment's Peace* is filled with ballads that show off a more tender side of the guitarist's melodic sound. While most of the songs on *A Moment's Peace* are originals, the album includes a beautiful take on The Beatles' "I Will" and a gentle reading

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