

# A Bunch Of Reviews...

**Arrogant Worms:** *Live Bait* — Ever listen to the Arrogant Worms? If not, go buy a copy (I know it's a bit blunt) of "Live Bait". Known as the Canadian clown princes of comedy, this is their first live album, and it features 12 tracks, including 6 that were never released before on their previous albums. With Worms' classics such as "The Last Saskatchewan Pirate", "Carfull Of Pain", and "Carrot Juice Is Murder" — as well as such great new tunes as "Mounted Animal Nature Trail" and "Canada's Really Big", this album is a sure thing. If you have a sense of humour you're bound to like the Worms. [www.cyberus.ca/~jeffmay/worms/worms.htm](http://www.cyberus.ca/~jeffmay/worms/worms.htm)

**Los Gusanos** (Subversion Records) — This is the first release from CJ Ward's band (you may know him as CJ Ramone). Featuring their unique brand of "motorcycle rock", this is a good album. All 12 tracks feature CJ's vocals, so if you liked his songs with the Ramones you're bound to like this album. Top tracks include "Bad Day", "Blue Sky", "On My Way" and "Carve Your Name". [www.losgusanos.com/](http://www.losgusanos.com/)

**Natalie MacMaster:** *My Roots Are Showing* (Warner) — Natalie is well known to be a fiddling phenomenon, and this is her latest release. Ending the album is a live cut, "A Glencoe Dance Set", with the rest being recorded in the studio. Another in a long line of great releases from her, it won her a Juno award recently for best instrumental album. [www.nataliemacmaster.com/welcome.html](http://www.nataliemacmaster.com/welcome.html)

**Dervish:** *Live In Palma* (Kells Music) — Dervish is an Irish traditional group, much in the same spirit of the Chieftains. This particular release is a double cd, featuring 22 tracks, every one of them a keeper. Some of the songs on this album feature vocals (most of which are in Gaelic), although the majority are instrumentals.

**Jack Williams:** *Across The Winterline* (Wind River) — This is a release from the newly created sublabel of Folk Era. Featured on this album is fine songwriting and relaxing folk music that crosses the line into country, rock, jazz and the blues. [www.folkera.com/windriver](http://www.folkera.com/windriver)

**Sheila Noonan:** *Radio Sweethearts* (Kells) — This album features a beautiful voice and a number of songs that are familiar to the people of the East Coast. Included are two JP Cormier (of Cape Breton) songs, "The Island" and "Another Morning", as well as "The Ballad of St. Anne's Reel" — a Prince Edward Island song. A couple of other great tracks include "Music Of Healing" by Tommy Sands and "Emigrant Eyes", a song that fans of John Allan Cameron are bound to know (it can be found on his "Glencoe Station" album also).

**Seven Nations:** *Big Dog* — This is a release from one of the premier Celtic rock bands from the United States. There are a few instrumentals here, emphasizing the highland bagpipes, as well as some fine vocal tracks, including "Crooked Jack". [www.sevennations.com](http://www.sevennations.com)

## Foreign Film Review with David MacDonald

### *Woman in the Dunes*

The recently warm temperatures probably inspire thoughts of summer days walking on sandy Prince Edward Island beaches, sand clinging to your heels. Sure, sometimes those dunes may be hard to climb over, but you don't mind. You'd frolic in the deep sand all day if you could. In fact, you might never want to leave [ed. note: Dunes are a fragile ecosystem: frolic responsibly].

Then again, you wouldn't be in the predicament facing the main character of the 1966 Japanese film *Woman in the Dunes*. He's an insect expert who takes a holiday from the noise of the city to explore a remote desert area, hoping to find a rare species of tiger beetle. Perhaps, he hopes, he'll have an insect named after him if he discovers it. He is awakened by a villager, and is told the last bus already left, and offers him a place to stay. The visitor says he would like that, for he enjoys experiencing local hospitality. If I were in this movie and had accepted his offer, I'd be kicking myself later for having said that.

It turns out that the house he stays in is in a deep pit, inhabited by a woman whose family was buried long ago by the sand. She tells him the sand is constantly falling into the cracks in the rickety house, and must be dug out every night. He finds this all rather peculiar, but things become more stranger. Next morning, the ladder he used to get down into the pit is gone. He cannot get out. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot do it, and is also forced into this unexplainable life. And his close proximity to the woman of the house develops into a couple of surprising passionate encounters.

There is no logic to the story; you can only experience it. If this were any other movie, it would probably make no sense at all. But with this treatment, the message seems to be that life is futile, and no matter how much you struggle, you'll always be knocked down and forced to struggle again and again. This explains itself in a perfect shot where the man, attempting to escape for the first time, tries again and again to run up the hill, while at the same time the sand keeps falling and falling downwards keeping him from moving any further. Even worse than that, however, is the notion that even when something better does in fact come along, a person may eventually feel so safe in their useless existence that there is no desire to find a better freedom. It may be too unusual, or even scary for them. What the main character does at the end is just bewildering.

The film itself is very well-done. The pacing and editing are great. Many stand-out scenes include a surprising moment when he actually does escape....for a while. There are also many shots of sand upon skin, well-defined when appearing on black-and-white film, and that composition works well in a lovely sequence where the two brush the sand off each other's skin and gradually enter into their first burst of passion.

This very mysterious film is definitely not for all tastes. But its great filmmaking makes it a worthy, if difficult, film.

Rating: \*\*\*1/2