

Choice Cuts

Stephan's Reviews

Album: *Skyscraper National Park*
Artist: Hayden
Hardwood

This is an intimate and affectionate homemade recording for everyone who has missed Hayden for the past couple of years. Hayden the songwriter is not afraid to put his heart into his words. He sings in a soft whispery voice, kind of like Neil Young except more subdued. His lo-fi arrangements and melodies are inventive, raw, and gorgeous. Somewhere in his rustic, folksy ballads emerges a spark of pop enjoyment. There are gems hidden on every track of this record. From his melancholy delivery to his struggle to hit high and happy notes, Hayden's voice carries his songs through various waves of emotion. Watch out for the string arrange-

ments, too. I can't begin to describe how wonderful those things make me feel. This record is spectacular.

-Stephan MACLEOD

Album: *Come With Us*
Artist: Chemical Brothers
Label: Astralwerks

The Chemical Brothers splash beats, blips, and samples on their latest dance floor canvas. *Come With Us* captures the uplifting essence of the techno duo, while they fit new sounds into their successful catchy formula. Their blend of big beat and ambient electronica has always made the Chemical Brothers stand out among their sample-crazy contemporaries. *Come With Us* has a similar atmosphere as their debut record *Exit Planet Dust*. Their instrumentals will leave

your head bobbing, their weird space-age beeps comfortably bounce along their intense electrifying drumloops, and the standard collaborations with singers (Beth Orton and Richard Ashcroft) are a welcome addition among the trance-inducing funk tunes. Listen to this album on a nice long drive.

-Stephan MACLEOD

Album: *Easy Street*
Artist: Andrea Curry
Label: Independent

The solo work of Bras D'or native Andrea Curry has been a mainstay in the Cape Breton music scene for several years now. Her latest EP demonstrates her vocal range and songwriting capabilities outside of the open mic arena. This professionally

recorded collection of upbeat jazzy acoustic songs is the perfect introduction to Andrea's music. However, with only five songs included, it will leave listeners wanting more. The title track is a poppy little number which playfully bops along while Curry's vocals swing over a cheery guitar melody. As the beats on "Institution" tap away in the background, the slow distorted guitar chords in the background linger over Curry's floating vocals. "Sweet Melody" is an ultra-hip, slow jam with a smooth bassline up front. Curry sounds like she's ready to take on the Nelly Furtados of the world with her own strong and independent take on pop music. The final track on *Easy Street* is a soft and spooky tune featuring just a guitar and a voice. A beautiful and talented voice.

-Stephan MACLEOD

