

Music Reviews

Transister
Transister
(interscope/universal)

The grunge formula of yesteryear just doesn't seem to be en vogue nowadays; but the concepts have remained the same. Introspective, self-doubting lyrics are attractively displayed with a fluffy verse and an extra-extra loud chorus...oh, it's a style that we have all grown to love and get a little bored of (so dictate the trends). The transition that is taking place nowadays is the formula becoming more studio oriented than artistically driven; production is getting better and less static, the aesthetic of the grunge movement is bowing out. The blend of soft/loud rock with electronic samples and digital undertones is exemplified in this, Transister's first album. Lead by guitarist/vocalist Keely, this trio clears a post-Nirvana sound with surprisingly good results. The strength is witnessed through the songs themselves and occasionally the overproduction gets in the way of what should really be, minimalist pop/rock. The opening track, "Look who's perfect now" and "What you are," wail with heavy synthesized fuzz guitar, while, "Dizzy moon" and "Weather boy," sound like a more sincere version of Garbage. The collection of eleven tracks has a few ballads with, "Flow" being one of the best tracks on the album. -M.H.

Dubstar
Goodbye
(polydor)

The traditional rock and roll lineup is dying a very slow death. We'll never see the guitar/bass/drum/vocal combo leaving the charts, at least not permanently, but we are seeing the rise of vocalist/programming groups. The reliance on electronic sampling and drum machines are at the heart of this genre. Dubstar, from the UK, are one of many European bands that are being exported to the Canadian market that follow this model. They incorporate live studio musicians into their recordings, possibly for legitimacy, as the main component in this album is the good ole computer. It may have helped if the songs sounded a little more real, as the present state of the music is totally unforgivable; it comes off as a throwback to bad 80's synth-central sound scapes. The lyrics themselves are delivered with a very mediocre voice; even the production of this record couldn't help that. The only genre that I would dare fit this music in would be bubble gum electronica; in between The Prodigy on a very bad day and Bananarama on an equally bad day. The positive side of this review, the title of the album is *Goodbye*, hopefully this is a hint that the band is dropping for us.

-M.H.

Refuel
Touch
(jaracanda)

Refuel call Quebec their home base and industrial rock and roll their message of propaganda to the rest of the world. Following the gospel of bands like Ministry, Biohazard and Suicidal Tendencies, Refuel is not afraid to expose their pop roots as well and produces an exciting release. Whereas the vocals are reminiscent of Raine from Our Lady Peace, the quartet speaks loudest through their electrifying music. Tracks like, "Long lost love" and "Killing words," are guitar laden overtures with questioning lyricism. Posing as a metal band one minute, a heavy alterno-pop outfit the next, and then a punk version of U2 clearly displays their diversity and allows for a more enjoyable listen. Clocking in under forty three minutes, it is rarely interrupted with needlessly long samples, instead, Refuel focus on the songs themselves and come up with a very strong eleven track record. Good things should follow from this disc for the band and for the independent label that it is released on.

-M.H.

Smoother
What a life
(emi/sonic unyon)

The state of Canadian indie music may not be as optimistic as a few years back when such promising acts as Radioblaster, The New Grand, Punchbuggy, Hayden and Treble Charger were making noise along with many of their comrades all over Canadian Campus/Community radio stations. Hayden and Treble Charger have gone on to do much bigger and better(?) things, but they owed much of their success to Sonic Unyon records. Operated and owned by Tristan Psionic of Hamilton, this indie label has its own galaxy of stars that compete with major label acts everyday. Smoother is taking a shot a being indie and major in synchrony with their album *What a life*. Great power pop action jumping off of this disc, Smoother offers melodicism to their underlying philosophy of punk/hardcore and comes up with an eleven track record that doesn't reach thirty minutes in length. What you should expect and what you will get is the loud fast rules objectivity of countless alternative bands; the difference is in the raspily sugared harmonies of this quartet. Standouts are "N.F.S.", "What a life", and "Apple crisp."

-M.H.

Matthew Good Band
Underdogs
(darktown/a&m)

The third release and the first major label produced record from Matthew Good Band screams with intensity and weighty guitars. The thirteen song grenades that are ever present on this album are held aloft with loud/soft contrasts and cocoo clock percussion precision. The heaviness of tracks, "Deep six," "Strangest one of all," and "Look it's the end of the world" are countered with psychedelic tendencies best witnessed on "Rico" which sounds like Soundgarden a la "Black hole sun" without the prozac. The mix between slow and fast, hard and soft is appealing and the order of the songs is sympathetic to the disc. The production is fabulous as the guitars and vocals never lose their drive and the rhythm section is always edging the listener onto greater climaxes. Some songs tend to be a half of a minute too long in that the reliance on instrumental breaks never really works on the album; although I am doubtless that it works on stage. "A high energy album for a high energy world"...try using that as the slogan for this record. -M.H.

