

Five Great Canadian Albums You Missed In 2004

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With our beloved hockey league on the fritz, who do Canadians have left to root for? Forget the Habs; 2004 was all about the Great White North's further conquest of the indie music world. 2005's release schedule looks every bit as promising as previous years, particularly in Atlantic Canada with ensuing sophomore efforts due from Matt Mays and Wintersleep, in addition to Joel Plaskett's latest solo effort.

5. Hayden – Elk Lake Serenade



Though Hayden's latest LP doesn't quite reach the heights of "Dynamite Walls" on his previous effort, *Elk Lake Serenade* is home to more than a few sonic gems. With *Elk Lake Serenade*, Hayden Desser takes another bold step into Tom Waits territory while retaining

Standout track: Wide Eyes

4. Feist – Let it Die



Leslie Feist is a rare talent with a gorgeous voice. After honing her chops in *By Divine Right* and contributing to Broken Social Scene's indie triumph *You Forgot it in People*, Feist traveled to Paris to record *Let it Die*, her self-dubbed "French-pop record." The album is divided A/B starting with five startlingly beautiful originals, and finishing with six covers, which range from Ron Sexsmith's "Secret Heart" to the Bee Gees' "Love You Inside and Out." I regret buying this CD for my girlfriend who lives in Toronto, because I miss it. Dearly.

Standout Track: Mushaboom

3. A.C. Newman – The Slow Wonder



As frontman for the bands Zumpano and the New Pornographers, Carl Newman crafted several of Canada's greatest power-pop songs in the past decade. With *The Slow Wonder*, A.C. has come through with one of Canada's greatest power-pop albums ever. Only a Canadian could make whistle solos and singing with a lisp endearing. For this, Mr. Newman, I salute you.

Standout track: Drink to me Babe, Then

2. Jim Guthrie – Now, More Than Ever

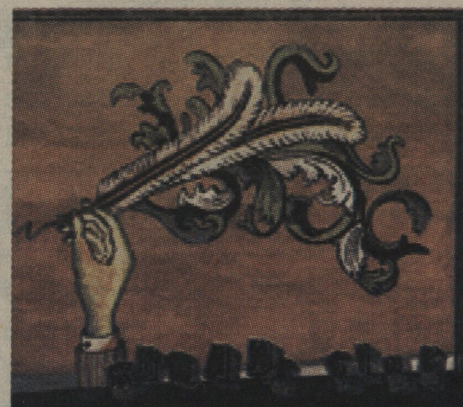


At one time, strings seemed to have a bright future in popular music, but somewhere along the way the string section got demoted to the role of making crappy bands sound "sensitive." Now we're faced with cello and a couple violins liberally thrown into Hoobastank's latest reincarnation of a monster ballad, and people looking for an honest fiddle were left in the lurch. That was, until Jim Guthrie released *Now More Than Ever*, an album which effectively saved the violin from certain doom. Arranged along with the Hidden Cameras' Owen Pallett, the strings are an integral part of every song on this record and shine

alongside Guthrie's brilliant songwriting and smart lyrics ("It's not what I've had to drink / that makes whatever I feel sink / ... / it's not what they've had to sip / that makes their petals all sag and dip.") Good work, buddy.

Standout track: All Gone

1. Arcade Fire – Funeral



Okay, maybe I went a little mental covering these dudes (three articles in five months?), but they deserve the attention. Fist-pumping riffs (ie: the huge bass line at 3:32 in "Power Out"), vivid lyrics, and walls of sound as strong as any of those found in a Neutral Milk Hotel or My Bloody Valentine song make this album an undisputed classic. Call it whatever you want – a lament for the lost, a shout at apathetics, 2004's "hype" album – *Funeral* is anthemic from start to finish, and it's the greatest record we've heard since Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*.

Standout track: Rebellion (Lies)