

Singles going steady

Reviewed by John Damon and Ian Chadwick

SAOSIN – You're Not Alone (Capitol) ○○○○ This is a huge, cheesy anti-suicide emo rock ballad from their self-titled album but the lush vocals and songwriting impress and bring to mind All-American Rejects' *Wrecked*. The chorus takes off like a jet fuel.

HELLO WEMBLEY – Up Great Britain (Velocity) ○○○○ This Reading garage-punk/synth punk sextet sure is one hell of a lot of fun, coming across like the South's rockier answer *Happy Mondays*. With witty lyrics about how shitty Britain is, this is promising stuff. Remember their name.

FOALS – Balloons (Transgressive) ○○○ This lyrically abstract angular indie pop song from the Oxford quartet is far better than you expect a bunch of art school dropouts to be and, alongside bands like Darzi!, are making angular pop exciting again.

JOHNNY PANIC – Dislocation (Repeat) ○○○○ A huge rock tune from this London rock quartet that is soaked in both a cool riff and nice melody. Taken from their second album *The Good Fight*, this is the sound of a confident melodic rock band hitting their stride.

SINGLE OF THE MONTH



DROPKICK MURPHYS – The State of Massachusetts (Born & Bred) ○○○○ Starting with some plucky banjo picking before the guitars, fiddle and marching drums kick in. This stomping, raw sing along anthem from new album *The Meanest of Times* is the perfect song to dance around to while reeking your Guinness and is an example of the Dropkicks at their fist pumping, Celtic best!

JONAH MATRANGA – Not About A Girl Or A Place (Xtra Mile) ○○○○ The San Franciscan former Far front-man shows why he's so loved with this folk pop rock song that has a massive chorus that showcases Matranga's unique and stunning vocals. One of the best singer/songwriters treading the boards.

SHERWOOD – Middle of the Night (MySpace) ○○○ The first band signed to this new label are an emerald rock/folk piece from California with an ear for a tune. Their album *A Different Light* could result in plenty of new friend requests.

ELLIOT MINOR – Still Figuring Out (Warners) ○○ This much hyped York quintet may look the emo girl and have some decent Panic! At The Disco-esque tunes but this one is more like McFly with added instrumentation. Overblown, sugary pop with guitars? No thanks.

BLOOD RED SHOES – You Bring Me Down (V2/Mercury) ○○○○ This spiky grunge punk duo from Brighton sure know how to pen an infectious song and Laura-Mary Carter's vocals have the urgency to match the lurching tune.

THE LIVING END – Wake Up (Deck Cheese) ○○○○ A brooding, compelling slice of horse-powered punk rock 'n' roll from Australia's finest, the latest single from *'State Of Emergency'* is a sinky little number, all class and minimal aise. Cracking.



Stevens and The Most Serene Republic. It's a heady mix of twisted indie and laid back vibes, and although it's not as easy a listen as it sounds, *'The Throne...'* is nevertheless contagious. It's also an album in the truest sense of the word, with songs colliding into each other and a similar vibe running throughout. There's a touch of Euphone and the Ivory Coast about the lush instrumentation too, which makes *'The Throne...'* a curious, wonderfully-developed musical odyssey.
Rob Mair

LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION FALLING OFF THE LAVENDER BRIDGE

(Domino)
Surprising rebirth for one-time Test icicle.
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Who would've think it? Just how did one third of what was essentially the 00's musical equivalent of Cat Aids (otherwise known as Test Icicles) bounce back, turning himself into Britain's answer to Bright Eyes with debut album *'Falling Off A Lavender Bridge'*, a rootsy, folksy album that bridges (no pun intended) a gap between Band Of Horses and Rocky Votolato? Dev Hynes only knows. Packed full of catchy tunes and honest emotion, *Lightspeed Champion* is a far cry from the sonic mayhem of Test Icicles as Hynes strums and plucks his way through a set of songs that would easily be at home in the Saddle Creek stable.
Jim Sharples

LIKE A MOVIE SAY IT AGAIN

(Audio Shock)
Could 2008 herald a pop-punk renaissance...?
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If it does, expect *Like A Movie* to be a major player, and *'Say It Again'* to become a staple listen. Mixing the passion and delivery of early Taking Back Sunday, the edginess of the Movielife and the insane catchiness of Fall Out Boy, *Like A Movie* may be short on original ideas, but have penned seven astoundingly good songs that deserve to be played loud, sung louder and cherished like a first crush. Both *'She Says I'm*

Living Too Much In 82' and *'I Took The Bullet'* are perfectly executed slabs of pop-punk, and although *'Autograph'* shines brightest, there's not a dull moment on show. Remember when you first fell in love with New Found Glory? *'Say It Again'* betters their debut *'It's All About The Girls'* on every level – so this time round you should be well and truly smitten.
Rob Mair

LOW LOW LOW LA LA LA LOVE LOVE LOVE

(Other Electricities)
Intriguing offering from ridiculously-named band.
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If the impressionist movement transcended the art world, this is precisely what a musical interpretation would sound like, a timeless depiction of ordinary life, coloured by unusual brushstrokes. Rising from humble aspirations and recorded and produced in their bedroom studio, *LowLow's* second album is the story of quiet and forgotten moments, compiled with tender affection. Wonderment of existence ensues through categorically transcendent music that seems to define the indefinable, precisely capturing the emotional spectrum of an average day. Warmth exudes from the opening song *'The Way You Play'*, the introspective vibe resulting in an enlightened outlook. Tracks such as *'The Messy One'* sound more like a performance at an intimate concert venue than a contrived studio session. *'Iron In The Soul'* and *'Black Black Window'* demonstrate the band's mastery of complex melodies, pensive harmonies and mature composition. As the album progresses each song takes a new turn, such as the surprising integration of folk elements and harmonica on *'Believer'*. *'Goodnight Louisa'* is the perfect song to listen to just before sleep, soft and simple, while *'Happiness At The New Day'* will provide you with just as it says, happiness at the start of the day. Listen to the album more than once before making a final judgment, as its potential is not realized first time around.
Michelle Friedman



MAD SIN 20 YEARS IN SIN SIN

(People Like You)
A lavish celebration of two decades of debauchery.
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Mad Sin celebrate 20 years of rockin' madness that has seen them come from the relative obscurity of squallid Berlin's psychobilly scene to headlining tours of the USA. This is a double CD (or very limited edition double vinyl album for you wax fiends) to celebrate what has been the unlakiest of success stories. The first CD is a mixture of old and new tracks plus some covers. All of them display the diversity yet consistency of Mad Sin: rich layers of psychobilly madness as displayed in tracks like *'Pig Farm'*, the true to the original out and out rockin' of *'Ride This Torpedo'* to the spooky clockenspiel of *'Cyclops Carnival'*. Either with studio tracks or live Mad Sin are entertainment with an E. Possibly why the second CD is a live show triumphantly recorded live in Hollywood to a baying audience of new generation psychobillies. The whole package is topped off with a couple of multi-media tracks for viewing pleasure on your PC completing a truly fantastic celebration of their crazy selves, truly one of the best exponents of the mutated musical genre that is psychobilly on the planet. Viva la Rock indeed.
Simon Nott

MANINKARI MANINKARI

(Conspiracy)
Two songs + two remixes = not great value.
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I must've annoyed someone this month, as Maninkari is a tremendously challenging – and tiresome test – and you wouldn't want your friends to sit through it. The fact that it says it has been 'composed by' on the cover says

it all really, as Maninkari is post-rock masquerading as classical art. It's possibly the most challenging, densest thing I've ever had the misfortune of listening to, as instruments crash, clang, bang and break in a seemingly random order. And worst of all, they've included two remixes on it – so you have to listen to the terror all over again.
Rob Mair

MARAH ANGELS OF DESTRUCTION!

(Munich)
Yet another album from uninteresting Yanks.
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The band have actually put what key each song is in on the back of the CD. Not a fantastic first impression. Opener *'Coughing Up Blood'* is a nice-enough rock 'n' roll number, but the vocals are strained and whiney. And with inspired lyrics like *'I'm a snowflake/I'm a dove'*, you wonder just who the frontman thinks he is. Which is a shame because they do have some really interesting elements. And harmonica solos are always a belting idea. It's a very cool, bluesy kinda album, and it makes me wonder why I haven't encountered them before, given their prolific back catalogue. Still, worth a listen.
Tracey Lowe

MEXICOLAS X

(In Exile)
Birmingham based rockers' debut proves that 'X' marks the spot.
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From opener and second single *'Come Clean'*, it is immediately clear that Mexicolas frontman Jamie Evans has impressive drawled vocals and that these guys can certainly pen an infectious melodic rock song. The sleazystomper *'Shame'* and the pop rock of *'Big In Japan'* drill this point home and if you count Stone Temple Pilots, Nirvana or Queens Of The Stone Age amongst your favourite bands, then this could be the UK band you've been waiting for. As comfortable writing soaring choruses as big riffs, they certainly have potential to break through, with the powerful radio rock of *'Falling Into Myself'* a potential hit alongside *'101'* and *'Times Infinity'*. With the right amount of push, Mexicolas could well grow into a great UK rock band.
John Damon