

20

— PLAYBOY'S —

40

11

MUSIC GUIDE

— 15 —

PEOPLE

AND

TRENDS

*THAT KEEP US
HYPED ABOUT MUSIC*

BY ROB TANNENBAUM



OH LAND

The stylish Nanna Øland Fabricius is ballet's gift to rock

She looks like a 1970s supermodel—Cheryl Tiegs but with a hint of Viking ancestry—and the glamour doesn't stop there. Nanna Øland Fabricius, a.k.a. Oh Land, was a ballerina with the Royal Academy in Denmark until a back injury grounded her. Fittingly, the music she now makes is very *Black Swan* in its sense of drama. *Oh Land*, her new album, mixes electronic beats and her soft, unpredictable singing, which has already saddled her with comparisons to Björk. For a peek at Fabricius's *Alice in Wonderland* love of the kooky and fantastical, look up her "Sun of a Gun" video.



GIRL IN A COMA

GOthy, GIRLIE & TATTOOED

A big-time musician we know—someone who has written hit songs, been nominated for a Grammy and played Madison Square Garden—swears by the roots-rock group Girl in a Coma. Nina Diaz, the singer and guitarist in this south Texas trio of female Mexican Americans, was only 17 when Joan Jett signed the group to her label. Gothy, girlie and generously tattooed, Diaz sings about savvy untamed girls "running away to the city" and living without regret. She wields an unmistakable voice—think Roy Orbison in red lipstick and black eyeliner—that's as brazen and sensuous as the heroines of her songs.

@ DISCOGRAPHIES

A witty Twitter account run by an anonymous rock critic who, with great accuracy but little mercy, assesses the entire career of an illustrious act, from Paul McCartney to Kanye West, in 140 characters or fewer.



ROBYN | SWEDISH OVERACHIEVER

What did you accomplish in 2010? The singer Robyn released three CDs, each full of tricky electronic beats and a defiant hip-hop attitude you would not expect from a resident of Sweden. Bonus: On "U Should Know Better" she coaxes a great guest spot out of Snoop Dogg, who has been coasting on his rep for years.



FELA KUTI

African Music Legend

Before he died, in 1997, this ferocious singer, saxophonist and militant—not only one of Africa's greatest musicians but one of the greatest rock stars ever—had released only a dozen or so records in the U.S. That oversight was remedied recently when 45 Fela albums were issued in short order. In his music, an African outgrowth of funk and jazz, you can hear the tumult of Fela's life and personality—he was married to as many as 27 women, smoked weed like it was oxygen and defied a succession of Nigerian dictators, one of whom ordered a raid on Fela's compound that resulted in the death of his mother after police threw her from a window.



HEIDECKER & WOOD

Fans of *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job!*, you'll have your loyalty tested by *Starting From Nowhere*, a CD by Tim Heidecker and Davin Wood. Do you love Tim and Eric enough to buy an album of falsetto 1970s soft rock that sounds like Kenny Loggins bidding for a comeback?



SUUNS

HAPPY, WEIRD and CANADIAN

We know only a few facts about Suuns—they're from Montreal and are signed to the cool label Secretly Canadian, home of other oddball alt bands we endorse, including Yeasayer and Here We Go Magic—and we plan to keep it that way. The songs on *Zeroes QC* are full of drones,

explosions and unfathomable lyrics such as "Don't you be yourself, you are someone else" that sound like bad advice. Their music seems to blur and smear, and knowing a Wikipedia of facts about Suuns would flatten our joy in imagining how they became so happy and weird.



the BAD PLUS

**JAZZ TRIO
TAKES A
BIG STEP**

There isn't much room in jazz for gimmickry, and that's how the Bad Plus struck us initially: Starting with its 2001 debut, this trio of piano, bass and drums interspersed original compositions with covers of songs by Abba, Nirvana, Blondie, Black Sabbath, Tears for Fears, Yes, the Bee Gees and Rush. (Its version of "Tom Sawyer" at least spares us the high-pitched vocals.) By doing away with covers, the Bad Plus's latest CD, *Never Stop*, lets us focus on the restless,

rolling exchanges, which borrow emphatic tricks from arena rock and film music, cheekily claiming them as part of the jazz tradition. Also, pianist Ethan Iverson maintains a blog, *Do the Math*, on which he writes provocatively on a range of topics, from books (he loves noir writer Donald E. Westlake) to pop music (he likens Kanye West to Stieg Larsson). As with the best bloggers, Iverson leaves you wondering why your friends aren't this interesting and passionate.

WANDA JACKSON

**JACK WHITE
RESURRECTS A
ROCKABILLY LEGEND**



She and Elvis Presley "were boyfriend and girlfriend," according to Wanda Jackson's quaint phrase. This was 1955, just after Jackson's high school graduation, when she toured Alabama, Arkansas and western Texas with a not-yet-famous Presley. Encouraged by Elvis, Jackson—now enjoying renewed attention thanks to a comeback album, *The Party Ain't Over*, curated by Jack White—accelerated from country to hotted-up rockabilly like the cock-teasing "Hot Dog! That Made Him Mad" and "Let's Have a Party," becoming the first female rock-and-roll singer. Long after Presley's death, his ex still proudly quotes a review that termed her "a nice lady with a dirty voice."

JANELLE MONÁE R&B GREAT

In the 1970s great R&B acts such as Labelle and Funkadelic looked and acted as if they'd been teleported from a distant galaxy far funkier than our own. Janelle Monáe is the proud daughter of this legacy. On *The ArchAndroid* she tells the story of an outlaw droid named Cindy who in the 28th century has violated the law by falling in love with a human, and the music explodes with her theatricality. Monáe is wearing a big pair of crazy pants and she's worth following closely.



DIMEADOZEN(dot)ORG

DimeADozen.org can be addictive. The website, meticulously stocked and patrolled by more than 100,000 registered users, hosts a searchable inventory of about 40,000 concert recordings. The sound quality is reliably fantastic, and bands can opt out of having their shows listed,

“A CROSS BETWEEN A BACKSTAGE PASS AND A TIME MACHINE”

which is why you won't find live material from Prince, the Allman Brothers or Nirvana. Despite those killjoys, there's more great music than you could ever listen to: Miles Davis in 1970, Neil Young in 1986, Charlie Parker in 1951, Cream in 2005, Elvis in 1976 and on and on.



JAMEY JOHNSON

COUNTRY ORIGINAL

The long hair, the unkempt beard, the black guitar strap with his first name embroidered in leather—take one look and you know Jamey Johnson is a throwback. Actually, more than that, he's like a country music caveman excavated intact from an Alabama ice sheet. A lot of country stars give lip service to tradition, then skip off to the mall. But Johnson revisits the genre's history of grisly subject matter, including drugs, boozing, whoring and vengeance. "Poor Man Blues," from his recent album *The Guitar Song*, is about a remorseless guy who seems to have murdered the rich jerk who stole his girl. Johnson's songs have a gravity that's gone rare in Southern music. And there's no better song about women than his "Women."



JAY ELECTRONICA

In the iTunes store you'll find only two Jay Electronica songs. The output seems paltry coming from a guy who has been hailed since 2008 as the next great rapper. He's not unproductive, though, just enigmatic; rather than release a full-length CD, he prefers to hide his songs across the internet like a squirrel hides nuts. On the great "Exhibit C," half his iTunes output, Jay name-drops Nas and Diddy and says that both these luminaries have urged him to release more music. A minute or so later he rhymes his name with *Hanukkah*. It quickly becomes clear he'd rather stay in the shadows than come into the spotlight. Topics range from the visceral (he grew up in New Orleans and rues what has become of the city) to the fantastical (he likes to talk about UFOs). In November Electronica was signed by Jay-Z's Roc Nation label. Normally this would point toward an album being released in 2011, but things are rarely normal with Electronica—singer Erykah Badu, with whom he has a child, says, "I wouldn't even call him a person." In the meantime, google "Jay Electronica discography" to find links to the dozens of fragments and ideas he's released so far.



SLEIGH BELLS

INDIE ROCK from BROOKLYN

Tattooed fourth-grade teacher Alexis Krauss met guitarist Derek Miller thanks to her pushy mom, who announced "My daughter sings!" when Miller waited on their table at a Brooklyn restaurant. It was like *Gypsy* recast for the Pitchfork era. The duo's cute name, like their CD title, *Treats*, is partly deceptive; their music is a shuddering sweet clamor, like a cheerleader wielding a chain saw through a GameStop store. And they've been noticed by Beyoncé, who has recorded with Miller for her next album.

JAZZ from ABROAD

An American art form goes global

Want to hear real alternative music? Try jazz. A century after Buddy Bolden blew his horn, this peculiarly American musical form carries on in surprising fashion. Europeans are keeping the music alive today. The most intriguing jazz is no longer released by stateside companies; it's on Portuguese or Spanish labels. Lisbon-based Clean Feed Records has made a name as an artist-friendly label that cranks out some of the most innovative jazz heard in years. Check out three recent Clean Feed releases: Tim Berne's *Insomnia*, Matt Bauder's *Day in Pictures* and *Deluxe* from Chris Lightcap's Bigmouth, all of which take ensemble playing to new levels. "Jazz is very much alive," says Clean Feed head Pedro Costa, "played and supported only by real people who really care about it. It's a movement of musicians." —Leopold Froehlich

