G.P. CRITICS POLL:
25 BEST ALBUMS OF 2001

A SELECTED PANEL OF A.P.'S WRITERS AND EDITORS SUBMITTED LIST OF THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2001; AFTER TALLYING THE VOTES, WE CAME UP WITH THE LIST BELOW.

FROM PUNK TO ELECTRONICA, Nu METAL TO RETRO ROCK, THESE ARE THE LONG-PLAYERS WE'LL RECALL WHEN WE LOOK BACK AT 2001. TAKE THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK OUT SOME GEMS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED.

1. RADIOHEAD

Amnesiac

The simple reason why Amnesiac fares so much better than 2000's quixotropic Kid A is because Thom Yorke & Co. sacrificed neither song structure nor spirit of adventure. That's why the electro-clausrophobia of "Pack Like Sardines..." is just as fascinating and memorable as the wiggly guitar drawls of "I Might Be Wrong." Radiohead have demolished their pigeonholes; one day music listeners will do the same to themselves. (CAPITOL) [JP]

2. TOOL

Lateralus

Like their buddies in Deftones, Tool have grown weirder and more inventive with each new disc, yet they've never been able to shake the moron-sympathetic "nu metal" tag. Christ, if Lateralus is nu metal, the rest of that genre has some catching up to do. At once surreal, alien, brutal and accessible, Lateralus is the only genuinely new metal to have conquered 2001's pop charts. (TOOL: DISSECTIONAL/ VOLCANO) [AB]

3. BJÖRK

Vespertine

In 2001, both Vespertine and Radiohead's Amnesiac featured abstract electronic music's clicks and cuts used brilliantly as pop songwriting tools. Only where the grim, detached Amnesiac carried all the joy of a nuclear winter, Vespertine—a mediation on life driven by Björk's romantic worldview and childhood sense of the magical—felt as beautiful as summer's first breeze. (ELEKTRA) [AB]

4. SQUAREPUSHER

Go Plastic

Tom Jenkinson raised his dizzying programming skills to a mad-genius peak on his fifth and finest album. Combining the best traits from his early spastic drill & bass era and the Milies Davis-ca.-72-on- crack moves of his later work, Squarepusher added another bizarre wrinkle to one of music's most warped oeuvres. Go Plastic could be the ultimate mindfuck album of 2001. (WARP) [DS]

5. CLINIC

Internal Wrangler

The cover of this British combo's American debut (it was released in England in 2000) pays homage to Ornette Coleman's 1962 classic In Orbit; the grooves on Internal Wrangler are similarly inspired by Coleman's free-thinking methods. An arresting hybrid of garage rock and lo-fi electronica (with about 12 more genres thrown in), Internal is eminently listenable schizophrenia. Listeners should definitely check into this Clinic. (DOMINO) [TH]

6. JIMMY EAT WORLD

Bleed American

Instead of being another major-label casualty, these Arizona natives bounced back and took the rock world by storm with the self-financed Bleed American. By adding a healthy dose of pop to their dynamic brand of emo/euro, they created a crossover album that both the X&Y impaired and indie aficionados couldn't get out of their heads all year. (DREAMWORKS) [JP]

7. THE START

Shakedown

Yeah, this L.A. quartet's debut magic has been the best album of 1983 with all its synth squiggles and singer Aimee Feche's quirky delivery. But Shakedown offers that rare mix of sheen ("Dirty Lion"), quirkiness ("Hang On Me") and crunching urgency ("Nemesis") that raises above mere forgettable pop fodder. Way more fun than an all-No Doubt weekend on MTV. (THE LABEL/ DREAMWORKS) [JP]

8. AIR

10,000 Hz Legend

Nicolas Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel could've rested on the laurels garnered by their popular albums Mona Seferi (1998) and The Virgin Suicides, OST (2000). But on 10,000 Hz Legend they expanded their sonic palette to include acoustic guitars, harmonicas, harps, strings, pianos and Seck, exploring myriad styles with grace and skill. From Lee Hazlewood-like ballads to Kraftwerk-esque electronics to weird rock, Air matured without getting boring. (SOURCE/ASTRALWEEKS) [DS]

9. SYSTEM OF A DOWN

Toxicity

If Rage Against The Machine were the Kaip Nader of nü metal, System Of A Down are the genre's Juko Bafna. The group wear their leftist politics up, on, not on, their sleeves, and they craft dizzying, subversive albums that go down like honey-coated cyanide pills. Sure, Toxicity sounds like a party, but it feels like an armed revolt. (AMERICAN) [AB]

10. LARS FREDERIKSEN AND THE BASTARDS

And The Bastards

Lars Frederiksen And The Bastards When Renard co-founder Tim Armstrong harangued Frederiksen to put together the Bastards and record this aural biography, he wasn't thinking about making the best punk album of the year—it just turned out that way. The disc burns with the sweaty and vibrant energy that effortlessly transcend old-school punk ideologies. So remember, MRR, Punk Planet and Warped Tour attendees: It's Lars' world, and you should be glad you're allowed in it. (EPITAPH) [JP]
JIM WHITE
No Such Place
Jim White is a Zen master trapped in the body of Dwight Yoakam. Ka-bam! Stash your guitar and tuck in your shirt, because White is about to give you a lesson in his life on the porch. It's the same guitar and songs from his past, but White is an American treasure.

DAFT PUNK
Discovery
Daft Punk's second album contains more absurdly tasty frothage per minute than anything we heard in 2001. Whereas 1997's Homework combined abrasiveness with catchy, Discovery (very, very, get it?) has been smoothed to a creamy sheen. The French duo's tunes stick in your cranium like early-'80s game-show themes or commercial jingles for products you don't need, and there's a certain genius in that.

WEEZER
Weezer
If you're an elitist emo scenester or someone who actually likes listening to music, install three in the Weezer saga that has something that touches your heart or makes you giggle like a baby. And with a 20-minute running time (shorter than Slayer's Reign In Blood), it proves less unequivocally more.

GORILLAZ
Gorillaz
Who would have ever thought that a cartoon side project from Blur's Damon Albarn and Dan The Automator (among others) would be a massive worldwide hit? No, but we're sure glad it did. A catchy set of hip-hop hybridization, Gorillaz proved that if the tunes are solid, you don't even need a real band to sell them. But I guess NSync's managers figured that out a while ago.

TORTOISE
Standards
After the massive disappointment of 1998's Overblown TNT, John McEntire & Co. actually reassembled a bit musically on Standards, but the results were far more satisfying. Proving that there is still life in that old post-rock genre, Tortoise continue to be a unique American treasure. We'll get them on the cover of A.P. someday.

MOGWAI
Rock Action
Rock Action may be the shortest of this Scottish combo's four albums, but it is easily the most satisfying. By adding structure, melodies and genuine tunes to their facchial guitar-noise formula, Mogwai have finally bridged the gap between guitar/rock and singerpop bliss.

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT
Poses
Rufus Wainwright has been a critical sweetheart since he debuted in '98, and it's easy to see why. Poses is pop music made the old-fashioned way, with baroque arrangements and sweeping romantic flourishes, and with heartbreaking lyrics that embrace the human condition in all its ragged, imperfect beauty.

NIC ENDO
Cold Metal Perfection
On her solo debut, the Atari Teenage Riot member devoted into much strange terrain that forges her own revolutionary electro-noise. Cold Metal Perfection embodies Endo's fascination with evil-sounding synthesizers and the music of her Black Mass. The disc also rocks to Sun Ra's spacey free jazz and ATR partner Avec Empire's more straightforward solo albums. Endo's daring experimental electronic spurs hit like a silo-necked bullet to the eye.

BEACHWOOD SPARKS
Once We Were Trees
You would be forgiven for thinking that Once We Were Trees was rescued from the rafts as some 1986 superwave including the Byrds, Beach Boys, and Buffalo Springfield, and then lies the album’s hopelessly nolloy charm. Homepun pop melodies, swooning harmonies and psychedelic-country vibes have seldom sounded this sweet, regardless of the calendar.

HOPE SANDOVAL AND THE WARM INVENTIONS
Banana Fruit Bread
With Fluffy Star AWOL, the band's frontwoman teamed up with My Bloody Valentine drummer Colm O'Cionn to produce a beautiful album that hews closer to the former's fuzzy fragility than to the latter's grandiose bliss. Sandoval's vocals face into you as if they were recorded during her dreams, while the music lifts in the gentle folk-country direction of Mojave 3 or Cowboy Junkies.

THE STROKES
Is This It
Next big thing or next week's has-been? Regardless of what you make of the musical politics of the Strokes and their massive hype, it's hard to deny that this is It. It is one hell of a debut album. While it may be too early to say the Strokes are the future of rock, I can't say it would be an entirely bad thing if they were. Ignore the hype—dig the tunes.

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB
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PEACHES
The Teachas Of Peachs
NEW ORDER
Get Ready
AUTOCRATES
Confeld
TRAVIS
The Invisible Band
OHGB
Welt
MIRWAIS
Production
BASEMENT JAXX
Rooty
SLAYER
God Hates Us All
PERNICE BROTHERS
The World Won't End

BUBBLING UNDER
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