

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

A SELECTED PANEL OF A.P.'S WRITERS AND EDITORS SUBMITTED LISTS OF THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2001; AFTER TALLYING THE VOTES, WE CAME UP WITH THE LIST BELOW. FROM PUNK TO ELECTRONICA, NÜ METAL TO RETRO ROCK, THESE ARE THE LONG-PLAYERS WE'LL REMEMBER WHEN WE LOOK BACK AT 2001. TAKE THIS GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO CHECK OUT SOME GEMS YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED.

TEXT:

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#1
RADIOHEAD
Amnesiac

The simple reason why *Amnesiac* fares so much better than 2000's quixotic *Kid A* is because Thom Yorke & Co. sacrificed neither song structure nor spirit of adventure. That's why the electro-claustrophobia of "Packt Like Sardines..." is just as fascinating and memorable as the edgy 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 "nü metal" tag. Christ, if *Lateralus* is nü metal, the rest of that genre has some catching up to do. At once artful, 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 meditation on life driven by Björk's romantic worldview and childlike sense of the magical—felt as beautiful as summer's first breeze. (ELEKTRA) [AB]



#4
SQUAREPUSHER
Go Plastic

Tom Jenkinson raised his dazzling programming skills to a mad-genius peak on his fifth and finest album. Combining the best traits from his early spastic drill & bass era with the Miles 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 *Ornette!*; 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 10 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 emocore, they created a crossover album that both the TRL impaired and indie aficionados couldn't get out of their heads all year. (DREAMWORKS) [JB]



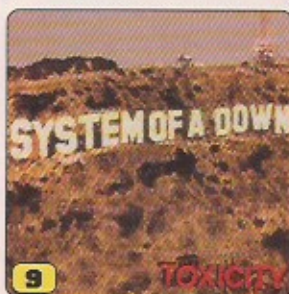
#7
theStart
Shakedown!

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



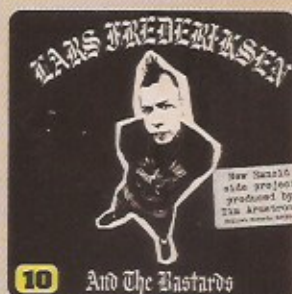
#8
AIR
10,000 Hz Legend

Nicolas Godin and Jean-Benoît Dunckel could've rested on the laurels garnered by their popular albums *Moon Safari* (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 Beck, exploring myriad styles with grace and skill. From Lee Hazlewood-like ballads to Kraftwerk-esque electro to weird art rock, Air matured without getting boring. (SOURCE/ASTRALWERKS) [DS]



#9
SYSTEM OF A DOWN
Toxicity

If Rage Against The Machine were the Ralph Nader of nü metal, System Of A Down are the genre's Jello Biafra. The group wear their leftist politics up, 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

When Rancid 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 sweat and vibrant energy that effortlessly transcend old-versus-new-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, sittin' on the porch, strummin' a guitar and triggering a sampler. On *No Such Place*, funky friends like Andrew Hale (Sade) and Morcheeba create a series of backdrops—both jubilant and desolate—for Jimbo to hang his good-ol'-boy philosophies and dark character studies upon. Singer-songwriters are as common as anthrax spores on Capitol Hill, but White is an American treasure. (LUAKA BOP/VIRGIN) [JP]

11



DAFT PUNK
Discovery

Daft Punk's second album contains more absurdly tasty *fromage* per minute than anything we heard in 2001. Whereas 1997's

12

funky *Homework* combined abrasiveness with catchiness, *Discovery* (very disco, get it?) has been smoothed to a cheeky 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. (VIRGIN) [DS]



WEEZER
Weezer

Low guitars, monster hooks and lyrics about clumsy adulthood. What's not to love about Weezer's comeback disc?

13

Whether you're an elitist emo scenester or someone who actually likes listening to music, installment three in the Weezer saga has something that will touch your heart or make you air-guitar like a beast. And with a 29-minute running time (shorter than Slayer's *Reign in Blood!*), it proves less is unequivocally more. (Geffen) [JP]



MATMOS
A Chance To Cut Is A Chance To Cure

Björk collaborators Drew Daniel and M.C. Schmidt have released one of the most ingenious concept

14

albums ever. Using sound sources derived from medical procedures and equipment, the San Francisco duo have breathed new life into cutting-edge electronica (especially in the track based on a nose job). Matmos bring a unique playfulness and danceability to electronic music, creating heady tracks from various body parts (and a plucked rat cage). (MATADOR) [DS]



GORILLAZ
Gorillaz

Who would have ever thought that a cartoon side project from Blur's Damon Albarn and Dan The Automator (among

15

others) would be a massive worldwide hit? Not us, 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. (VIRGIN) [TH]



TORTOISE
Standards

After the massive disappointment of 1998's overblown *TNT*, John McEntire & Co. actually regressed a bit

16

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. (THRILL JOCKEY) [TH]



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

17

structure, melodies and genuine tunes to their glacial guitar-noise formula, Mogwai have finally bridged the gap between guitarfornism and gossamer pop bliss. (MATADOR) [TH]



FOETUS
Flow

Name a style of music and Jim "Foetus" Thirlwell has eviscerated it, scooped out the parts he likes and

18

thrown the remains from the top of a tall building. On *Flow*, he's in peak form, shattering genres and gluing the pieces back the wrong way for maximum effect. That's the reason why death metallers, industrial-rock rivetheads and avant-gardeners are down with Foetus. The companion remix disc (*Blow*) is equally bitchin'. (THIRSTY EAR) [JP]



FUGAZI
The Argument

As revolutionary sound goes, Fugazi's work matters less musically than it does philosophically. *The Argument* is a fine

19

album, sure—Fugazi's sweetest marriage yet of subtlety and strength—but it's more important just for being the latest Fugazi release. One-hundred-percent DIY since 1987, these veteran post-punks are living proof that it's possible to make it on your own terms. (DISCHORD) [AB]



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

20

music made the old-fashioned way, with baroque arrangements and sweeping romantic flourishes, and with heartstring-tugging lyrics that embrace the human condition in all its ragged, imperfect beauty. (DREAMWORKS) [AB]



NIC ENDO
Cold Metal Perfection

On her solo debut, this Atari Teenage Riot member deviated into much stranger terrain than that forged by her

21

other outfit's propagandistic electro-noise. *Cold Metal Perfection* evidences Endo's fascination with evil-sounding analog synths à la Lucifer's *Black Mass*. The disc also nods to Sun Ra's spacey free jazz and ATR partner Alec Empire's more dissonant solo albums. Endo's daring experimental electronica opus hit like a stiletto-heeled boot to the eye. (GEIST/DIGITAL HARDCORE) [DS]



BENT
Programmed to Love

Expertly crafted from some of the most disparate and downright goofy sound sources imaginable, Bent's

22

debut full-length transcends the samples that give the album its character. The duo's elegantly dreamy electronica is both effortlessly light and hopelessly complex, making for a collection that rewards repeated listens handsomely. (SPORT/MINISTRY OF SOUND) [TH]



BEACHWOOD SPARKS
Once We Were Trees

You would be forgiven for thinking that *Once We Were Trees* was rescued

23

from the vaults as some 1968 supersession including the Byrds, Beach Boys and Buffalo Springfield, and therein lies the album's hopelessly mellow charm. Homespun pop melodies, swooning harmonies and psychedelic-country vibes have seldom sounded this sweet, regardless of the calendar. (SUB POP) [TH]



HOPE SANDOVAL AND THE WARM INVENTIONS
Bavarian Fruit Bread

With Mazzy Star AWOL, the band's frontwoman teamed

24

up with My Bloody Valentine drummer Colm O'Ciosoig to produce a beautiful album that hews closer to the former's hazy fragility than to the latter's galvanic bliss. Sandoval's vocals fade into you as if they were recorded during her dreams, while the music lolls in the gentle folk-country direction of Mojave 3 or Cowboy Junkies. (ROUGH TRADE/SANCTUARY) [DS]



THE STROKES
Is This It

Next big thing or next week's has-beens? Regardless of what you make of the musical politics of the Strokes and their massive

25

hype, it's hard to deny that *Is This 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. (RCA) [TH]

BUBBLING UNDER

- BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB > Black Rebel Motorcycle Club
- PEACHES > The Teaches Of Peaches
- NEW ORDER > Get Ready
- AUTECHRE > Confield
- TRAVIS > The Invisible Band
- OHGR > Welt
- MIRWAIS > Production
- BASEMENT JAXX > Rooty
- SLAYER > God Hates Us All
- PERNICE BROTHERS > The World Won't End