hard to quibble over trivia. Plus, it's a friggin' beautiful package. For diehards and dilettantes alike, this is a winner.

(Mute; www.mute.com)
Phil Freeman

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Electric Ladyland: Clickhop Version 1.0

From chest-beating hip hop to skittering glitch hop.

After six volumes (two of them double-disc sets), the ultra-macho, skull-cracking mutant hip hop of the Electric Ladyland comps was getting a little tired. It didn't help that a regular cast of characters (Alex Empire, Techno Animal, Spectre) had basically taken over each successive release. This new incarnation is decisively refreshing, though, and not just because it's glomming onto the sound of the moment. The oft-killer, vaguely unsettling sounds of digital error are the building blocks here, as a bunch of artists most folks wouldn't recognize create tracks that would make Timbaland fill his baggy jeans with jizz and hot feces. Even DJ Spooky's contribution doesn't suck. This is a great leap forward (that's a joke, son; see the cover art for details) for the series. Good for them, staying relevant like that. (Mille Pialoux, www.mille-pialoux.com)
Phil Freeman

ANDRE ESTERMANN

Ballooon

Faceless, yet addictive, post-house.

It's all been done before, sad to say. The algebraic beat structures, ascending synth melodies, touches of post-production effects tweaking—it's all so

1997. Why, then, is Balloon so compelling? Maybe it's due to Andre Estermann's reluctance to toe the cool and limp line of most IDM producers, and his desire to inject his metallic beats with some passion. Translating house and straight-up pop (his synth work's highly lyrical—check track nine) through Autechre's fragmented lexicon, Estermann assembles 12 tracks into a kinetic whole, meant for consumption both at home and at the club. (Sellwell; www.sellwell.de)

JASON OLARIO

FAUST

The BBC Sessions

Vintage weirdness from the weirdest krautrock group of them all.

This archival release adds to Faust's reputation as the unknown German supergroup from a parallel universe. Faust never cared about being successful, and were essentially the result of a major record company's unbelievable lapse of judgment. After the band had messed around in their subsidized communal house/studio from 1970-73, smoked a lot of dope and produced nothing of commercial value, the embarrassed record company finally bailed. The high point of this release is a medley recorded live at the BBC Studios in 1972. Overall, the Faust "sound" displayed on this CD is a mixture of Soft Machine, early Sonic Youth, Glenn Branca, the Incredible String Band and a bunch of stoned loonies. Amazing stuff for 1972, and still amazing, as a matter of fact. (Rer; dist. by Cuneiform; www.cuneiformrecords.com)
Bill Tidland

FOETUS

Blow

Industrial pioneer's latest album gets remixed by some creative producers.

Foetus axis Jim Thirwell's latest release, Blow, was an indifferent, uneven experiment, but thanks to his royal butchering by the dance world's finest jocks, this remix album is a bona-fide miracle cure. Amon Tobin can sensitize the ugliest noise, and on Blow he creates "Cinethosis Of The Heart" with the full Bricolage-Batucada treatment. Young Gods leader Franz Treichler buries "The Need Machine" in Doppler-effect delay that makes Thirwell's gritty voice fade in and out like a drowning man's. And so on, through the meat grinder it goes: Jay Wasco purrs "Victim Or Victor" with ear-chaing free-jazz skronk; Ursula 1000 gives "Someone Who Cares" a reverent Hawaiian-blue makeover; Kidneytheese throw away his long-held "no-fx" trigger and rely on the helpless "Grace Of God," while Thirwell's own lyrical cliches intensify the queasiness of DJ Food's "Suck." Only Phylly fully leaves the ghost from the machine with the eerie "Mardelay." (This guy oughta score horror movies full time.) Blow's greatest asset is its ecuicidal, corollary songs as disparate as ex-Nine Inch Nails Charlie Clouser's angular grind ("Quick Fix"), Pan Sonic's icy drizzle ("Kreibabe") and the Cusinartified grind of Kid606's "Shrun." Thirwell's own remix of "The Need Machine" is servicable drum & bass exotica, but the only one who doesn't live up to his customary greatness is German techno fiend Panacea, whose đackle latches over "Hueloch 7B." (Thirsty Ear; www.thirsty.com)
Andrew Lentz

DJ FOOD & DK

Solid Steel Presents: Now, Listen!

Ninja Tune DJs make their cuts click on this phenomenal mix CD.

Originally meant to commemorate the Ninja Tune label's 10-year anniversary, Solid Steel Presents became a series capturing the mixologist spirit of "Solid Steel," the Monday-night BBC Radio show created by label founders Matt Black and Jonathan Mvelle (a.k.a. Coldcut). The series' first installment, Now, Listen!, sees DK (Darren Key) and DJ Food (PC and Strictly Kev)—"Solid Steel's" erstwhile roustabouts—cutting and cutting their favorite tracks in the service of MC toasts and hecatop jazz. To wit: Blackalicious' "Alphabet Aerobics" gets speeded up over a "Cut Chemist 2.5 Minute Workout"; X-exucers scratch around with woolly-busting boom-bap over flatulent synths and shrill horns on "Musica Negra"; and Satél Martinez' percussion meltdown, "Hotel Alysa—Soussia, Tunisia," recalls an all-night Fela Kuti jam session.

Furthuring the disc's raptocentric thrust, Mr. Scruff's already killer "Ug" becomes fodder for DJ Vadim to spit over. Almost as if to prove they love more than just hip hop, Food and DK include the Beats' "Mirror in the Bathroom" with its ska glory mostly intact; protopop-toppers Art Of Noise lombo nostalgically with "Moments in Love"; and finally, the crooked atmospheres of Boards Of Canada's "The Colour Of The Fire" cater to EDM oggheads. Even Now, Listen!'s "intermissions" are edifying, especially the trap-set session on "Let's Play Drums." (Ninja Tune; www.ninjatune.net)
Andrew Lentz