Sleater-Kinney — Out of the Window

GARbage — Going稳稳

Foetus

Love

Birdman

In high school, I thought Jim Thirwell was capital-S Scary. His band names (Scraping Foetus Off the Wheel was the best-known, Foetus All-Nude Revue the funniest) were deliberately off-putting, the cover art was inexplicably creepy and the music was a bewildering mixture of electronics, martial rhythms, disjointed song structures, and full-on noise. At the time, “Death Rape 2000” (the b-side of his ’85 single “Motorslug,” released under the name Wiseblood and recorded with Swans (leader Rollick Mosmann) was the most deliberately annoying song I had ever heard: it’s a one and a half second sample of a stabbing three-note synth figure, looped and repeated ad nauseam for seven and a half minutes.

These days, he makes music for cartoons (seriously, watch The Venture Brothers, it’s awesome), and following 2001’s creative rebirth Flow, Love continues the kinder, gentler trend of Thirwell’s muse. It’s not that he’s wimped out in any way, simply that while the songs on Love are no less intense — “Aladdin Reverse” is seven and a half minutes of grinding, hyper-dramatic angst in classic Foetus style — they’re much more varied in their musical approach, dynamics, and arrangements. The ghostly, mostly percussionless creep of “Pareidolia” is just as wound-up as the more overtly aggressive “How To Vibrate,” but it’s also weirdly, unexpectedly pretty.

PLUS:
Ian Hunter, The Sights, Outrageous Cherry, Mardo, Joy Zipper, Bettie Serveert, Benevento-Russo Duo, Robert Schneider, Keane, Modest Mouse, Jimmy Chamberlin Complex, Cruiserweight, Mia Doi Todd