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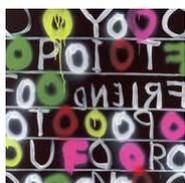
# TIMMY AWARDS

ONE MAN'S ANSWER TO THE GRAMMYS

2007



I think 2007 was a great year for music. It was easy to come up with 50 great albums, ranking them was a little harder. In fact, I have 51 albums in my top 50 as two went together. I also took it upon myself to pull-out compilations as their own category for the first time, you'll see those after #1. Were that not enough, I put in some YouTube links so you can see and hear what I'm blathering on about...



**50. Deerhoof - Friend Opportunity** - Experimental in a cartoonish way with childlike female vocals in a Japanese accent- original and oddly melodic.

[YouTube: Deerhoof- The Perfect Me](#)



**49. Extra Golden - Hera Ma Nono** - Two indie musicians from D.C. meet two musicians from Nairobi to create what sounds mainly African-influenced but is truly guitar-driven world music.

[YouTube: Extra Golden- Six minute promo video](#)



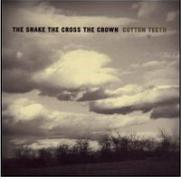
**48. Scout Niblet- This Fool Can Die Now** - A little like PJ Harvey, a little like Cat Power, a little like Feist and a lot more twang, Scout is making a name for herself with a sound that's reminiscent of others but also fresh.

[YouTube: Scout Niblet- Kiss](#)



**47. Winterkids - Memoirs** - Energetic boy/girl vocals in the debut from this UK group. More than a hint of new wave, and while this won't change the world, it's a peppy, fun listen.

[YouTube: Winterkids- All The Money](#)



**46. The Snake The Cross The Crown - Cotton Teeth** - Along the same lines as Bright Eyes and Ryan Adams, country-tinged rock, or is it rock-tinged country? The Band is a good comparison on a few of these tracks.

[YouTube: The Snake The Cross The Crown- The Great American Smokeout \(Live- bad quality\)](#)



**45. A-Trak - Dirty South Dance** - Like Girl Talk before him, A-Trak used the mash-up as an art form. But unlike Girl Talk's ADHD trip through the past 20 years of pop, A-Trak focuses mainly on pairing dirty south rappers with Euro dance tracks. It's a combination that work surprisingly well.

[YouTube: A-Trak- short video of A-Trak at the turntables](#)



**44. We All Have Hooks For Hands - The Pretender** - A South Dakota band cracks the Timmy Awards. Ever wonder what "Temptation" era New Order would sound like if they were replaced with a lo-fi group of band geeks? Listen to this band's "Jumpin' Jean Luc". Nine members strong, they craft off-kilter pop that's pretty darn catchy.

[YouTube: We All Have Hooks For Hands- Jumpin' Jean Luc \(Live- bad quality\)](#)



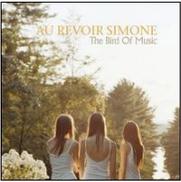
**43. Meg Baird - Dear Companion** - A mix of covers, traditional songs and two originals, this quiet, folky solo album from the lead singer of Espers is pretty music without being cloying, not an easy task.

[YouTube: Meg Baird- The Waltze of The Tennis Players \(Live- terrible quality\)](#)



**42. The Cave Singers - Invitation Songs** - Refugees from post-punk bands form Cave Singers and turn the amps way down, resulting in a rustic, folky set of songs that also hints to the members' indie rock pedigrees.

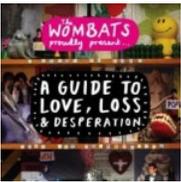
[YouTube: The Cave Singers- Dancing On Our Grave](#)



**41. Au Revoir Simone - The Bird of Music** - Dreamy synth pop by this Brooklyn trio- all three members are female, play keyboards and sing. The vocals are sweet without being sickening, and the synth-laden songs retain a very human quality.

[YouTube: Au Revoir Simone- Sad Song](#)

[YouTube: Au Revoir Simone- Fallen Snow](#)



**40. The Wombats - A Guide To Love, Loss & Desperation** - Like Art Brut, The Wombats mix humor into their punky pop tunes, and they work more often then not. "Let's Dance To Joy Division" garnered more attention, but I prefer the punchy, date-gone-bad tale of "Backfire at The Disco."

[YouTube: The Wombats- Backfire At The Disco](#)

[YouTube: The Wombats- Let's Dance To Joy Division](#)



**39. Tinariwen - Aman Iman: Water Is Life** - A repeat Timmy winner, their previous album hit 25 on my list in 2004. This one may be even better, melding their Mali desert blues with more rock influences, with a little help from Justin Adams, guitarist for Robert Plant.

[YouTube: Tinariwen- Aman Iman \(17 Minute Documentary on the band\)](#)

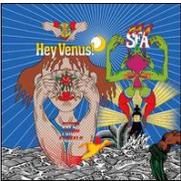


**38. Kanye West - Graduation** - For someone who sells as many records as Kanye, he still keeps things interesting and very listenable. He chooses his guests and samples wisely and his style and lyrics remain sharp.

[YouTube: Kanye West- Stronger](#)

[YouTube: Kanye West- Good Life](#)

[YouTube: Kanye West- Can't Tell Me Nothin'](#)



**37. Super Furry Animals - Hey Venus!** - #4 in the Timmys in 2004, SFA didn't do much for me in their two albums following. They are back in fine form here, with eleven strong, catchy songs that mix Pet Sounds influence with modern britpop, with a dollop of ELO for good measure.

[YouTube: Super Furry Animals- Run-Away](#)



**36. The Cribs - Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever** - UK trio stands out from the pack in this sharp collection of songs, produced by Alex Kapranos of Franz Ferdinand with a guest spot from sonic Youth's Lee Renaldo.

[YouTube: The Cribs- Men's Needs](#)



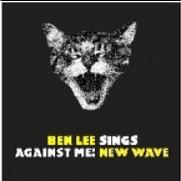
**35. Animal Collective - Strawberry Jam** - Brooklyn's Animal Collective continue to find that tenuous thread that links the experimental and the accessible. Beneath the blips, roars, and crashes are some really catchy melodies, and that's what makes this noisy mess somehow listenable.

[YouTube: Animal Collective- Peacebone](#)

[YouTube: Animal Colletive- Fireworks](#)



**34. Against Me! - New Wave / Ben Lee - Sings Against Me! New Wave** - Punky, folky and shouting all the way, Against Me! jumps to the major labels with a tight, catchy collection of songs with equal amounts of brains and braun. The vocals are a little rough at first, but once they grow on you, the driving guitars and intelligent lyrics take over.



Being a sucker for cover versions, I was delighted to see that the power-poppy Ben Lee took it upon himself to cover the entire album as he was a huge fan. The tow cover accurately (and humorously) show the difference between the two styles. Ben strips away all of the aggression and reveals the tenderness and sharp melodies that lay at the heart of Against Me!'s songs. Were that not enough, [download Ben Lee's covers of the New Wave album here- free of charge](#).

[YouTube: Against Me!- Thrash Unreal](#)

[YouTube: Against Me!- Thrash Unreal \(Acoustic\) \(Live in a radio studio\)](#)

[YouTube: Ben Lee- Thrash Unreal \(Live in a radio studio\)](#)



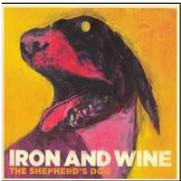
**33. Menomena - Friend And Foe** - Another repeat Timmy winner (#18 in 2004), Menomena takes songs that seem like they will fall apart at any moment but manage to stay together. In your face drumming, keyboards, baritone sax are just a few of the instruments in the mix here- they sound a little like the Flaming Lips but are blazing their own trail.

[YouTube: Menomena- Wet And Rusting](#)



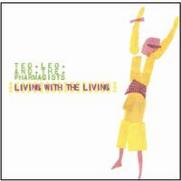
**32. Future Clouds & Radar - Future Clouds & Radar** - Former Cotton Mather leader creates a new band that debuts with 2 discs worth of poppy psychedelia, more towards the XTC or later Beatles end of the psych spectrum.

[YouTube: Future Cluds & Radar- Dr. No](#)



**31. Iron & Wine - The Shepard's Dog** - Sam Beam has come a long way from his 2002 debut, fleshing out his folky tunes with a full palette of instruments from around the globe. His debut sounded like it was made by someone who never left his cabin in the woods- this sounds like someone who's traversed the globe more than once.

[YouTube: Iron & Wine- Boy With A Coin](#)



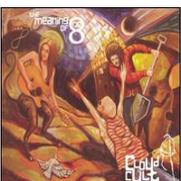
**30. Ted Leo & The Pharmacists- Living With The Living** - Ted Leo keeps cranking out the same solid pop/punk/mod/ska/rock/irish/reggae blend with a conscience, but these time he blends styles a little less than before.

[YouTube: Ted Leo & The Pharmacists- Colleen](#)



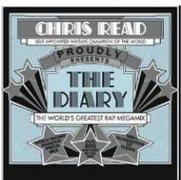
**29. Maximo Park - Our Earthly Pleasures** - Edgy, new wave influenced UK guitar rock, branching out towards new styles on their sophomore release.

[YouTube: Maximo Park- Girls Who Play Guitars](#)



**28. Cloud Cult - The Meaning of 8** - A striking indie-rock effort not too far from the same terrain that Arcade Fire treads, though there's a little more experimenting with electronics and grooves here than Arcade Fire. An ambitious album that hits more often than it misses.

[YouTube: Cloud Cult- Chain Reaction \(Live in a radio studio\)](#)



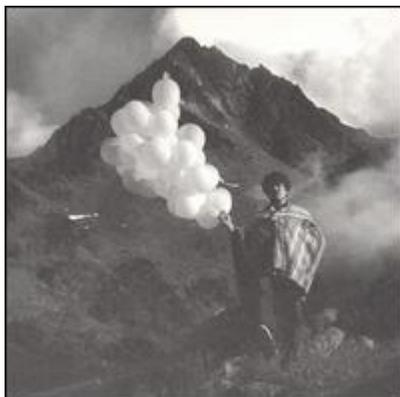
**27. Chris Read - The Diary** - UK turntablist Chris Read isn't the first to take the history of rap and do a hundreds-of-songs megamix of them- fellow Brit Jaguar Skills did the same last year and got to 41 on the Timmys. What Chris does better is blend his snippets together so they sound like new songs altogether- my favorite bit is the vocals of Stetsasonic's "Talkin' All That Jazz" over 45 King's "900 Number". If you know either of

those tunes, [download this now free of charge- tracklist of all 800 samples also available.](#)



**26. Delta Spirit - Ode To Sunshine** - I can thank the fine people at [Daytrotter](#) for exposing me to this gem, both from their website and the Thanksgiving weekend show at a Rock Island pizza parlor I was lucky to attend (I travel the globe to do the Timmys for you good people). You can probably guess from the album cover that we're talking rootsy Americana here, but there's a decidedly current sound present here as well. Solid songs, tight and straight-ahead playing that's reflective and raucous at all the right points.

[YouTube: Delta Spirit- Trashcan \(Live in a parking lot\)](#)



**25. Richard Swift - Getting Up For The Letdown** - Ed Harcourt is a UK singer/songwriter than channels Harry Nilsson and Randy Newman into a modern indie-rock package- he almost always winds up on my year-end list. He didn't release an album in 2007, but I happily found his U.S. kindred spirit in Richard Swift. Mostly piano-based tracks that sometimes sound like they came from the early 70's, and other times sound brand new. Intelligent, introspective and melodic, a very welcome voice that I hope will be around for a long time.

[YouTube: Richard Swift- Kisses For The Misses](#)



**24. DJ Format & Mr. Thing - Holy Shit** - DJ Format cracked the top 5 of the Timmys in 2005 with his old-school heavy album, *If You Can't Join 'Em, Beat 'Em*. He's back with fellow turntablist Mr. Thing, both who apparently have been collecting religious music from thrift shops around the globe. They blend them together here in one long mix that's suprisingly funky and psychedelic considering the source material. This is crate digging at its best, bringing lost relics back to life in a form that's funky and fun.

[YouTube: DJ Format- The Hit Song \(not on this album\)](#)



**23. Arctic Monkeys - Favorite Worst Nightmare** - The pride and joy of Sheffield are quickly back with their second album (their debut hit 18 on my list in 2006). No sophomore slump here, this album continues with the sharp lyrics and punchy rhythms of the first, while move forward slightly. It didn't change the world, but gave notice that this band isn't going away anytime soon.

[YouTube: Arctic Monkeys- Brainstorm](#)

[YouTube: Arctic Monkeys- Teddy Picker](#)



**22. Josh Ritter- The Historical Conquests Of** - People don't throw around the phrase "the new Dylan" the way they once did, but it wouldn't be out of line if that phrased was tossed in Mr. Ritter's direction from time to time. He crams a lot of words into a small space when he needs to and on this latest effort, he uses catchy rock and a truckload of instruments to create a collection of smart songs that often sound like they could have been from anytime in the last 40 years.

[YouTube: Josh Ritter- To The Dogs Or Whoever \(Live\)](#)

[YouTube: Josh Ritter- Mind's Eye \(Live\)](#)



**21. Radiohead - In Rainbows** - Much has been made of the way Radiohead distributed their album- the now infamous "It's Up To You" honor-box download- that the music itself sometimes took a back seat. Which is a real shame, as Radiohead really expanded their canon by actually reeling back some of the experiments of their past few albums. That isn't to say this is Top 40 fare- they remain one of the more groundbreaking groups to be anywhere close to the mainstream. While not being totally stripped away, the electronics are scaled back and the guitars are turned up. By doing so, Radiohead takes a step forward- packaging their music in a way that's still forward looking but more easily digestible. And the kick in the pants their download distribution system gave the record industry is nothing to sneeze at either.

[You Tube: Radiohead- Scotch Mist \(In Rainbows live in the studio\)](#)



**20. White Stripes - Icky Thump** - After some time away with The Raconteurs, ol' Jack White is back with his "sister" for their sixth album. And it's another really good effort, solid from start to finish. The expanded sonic vocabulary of *Elephant* continues here. Horns and bagpipes are just a few of the goodies embellishing the standard guitar and bass. Some of the Led Zeppelinisms that The Raconteurs explored come to play here (well, Meg's no Bonham by any stretch, but some of the guitar lines and vocal turns remind one of classic Zeppelin). There are few bands whose sixth album is this solid.

[YouTube: White Stripes- You Don't Know What Love Is](#)

[YouTube: White Stripes- Conquest](#)



**19. Battles - Mirrored** - I wonder what to say of Battles as it could be that anyone interested in this type of music has already heard it- this is strict, indie rock geek stuff. At times jazz fusion, post-punk and math rock, this isn't for everyone- it comes close to being a little too artsy for its own good. But it stops short of that line by solid playing of these musicians- when they lock in, they create a groove as tight as anyone. If you don't mind that groove being far left of center, Battles may be worth checking out.

[YouTube: Battles- Atlas](#)

[YouTube: Battles- Tonto](#)



**18. Feist - The Reminder** - "1, 2, 3, 4/bet she gets discounts at the Apple Store /kinda glad she sold that song/more people will know her before too long" Yeah, it's the girl dancing around in the iPod Nano commercial, but (Leslie) Feist is more than the most unlikely pitchwoman of 2007. Her prior album, *Let It Die* (not counting the interim odds and end collection, *Open Season*) was a smart and eclectic mix of songs and this is no exception. Soft and jazzy at times, fun and rollicking at others, Feist is quickly putting her name on the list of artists to pay attention to. And if appearing on an iPod commercial speeds that process up a little, I've got no beef with that.

[YouTube: Feist- I Feel It All \(Live on Jimmy Kimmel on a bus\)](#)

[YouTube: Feist- 1234 \(Live on Later...with Jools Holland\)](#)

[YouTube: Feist- 1234 \(Live on Letterman\)](#)

[YouTube: Feist- My Moon My Man](#)



**17. Deerhunter - Cryptograms** - Well, I guess if you stare at that album cover at the left long enough you would get a good idea of what Deerhunter sounds like: hypnotic, odd, spacey, more than a little psychedelic, out there. At times blissed-out and ethereal, ideal for staring at the sky, and at others, groove driven and guitar-laden, perfect for driving. That the two switch back and forth may mean it's appropriate for neither, but there is definitely a time and place for this album in the lives of the more adventurous listener.

[YouTube: Deerhunter- Strange Lights](#)

[YouTube: Deerhunter- Lake Somerset](#)



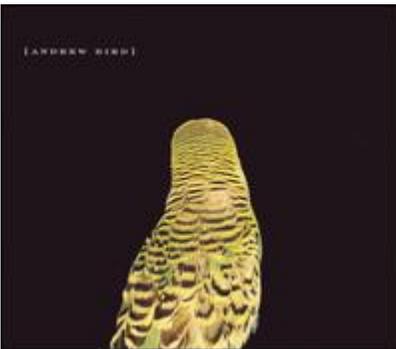
**16. Dr. Dog - We All Belong** - Dr. Dog hails from Philadelphia and are in a lot of ways that bar band you hope you would stumble upon- classic rock influenced, good soundtrack for hoisting a few back to. The Band, The Beach Boys and The Beatles are obvious influences, but I also hear Guided By Voices (well, maybe if GBV was a little less low-fi). There's a distinct laid-back feel throughout and it suits the material well- nice poppy rock that entertains and relaxes.

[YouTube: Dr. Dog- My Old Ways](#)



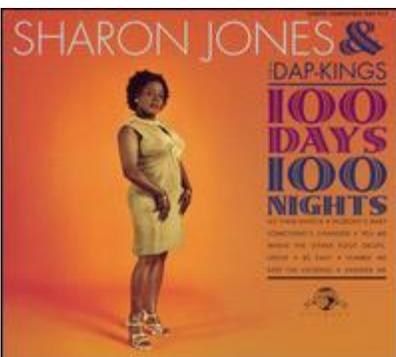
**15. The Earlies - The Enemy Chorus** - This album begins with almost two minutes of bleeping, charging keyboards before the vocals come in, and once they do, both The Beta Band and Flaming Lips come to mind. At the 4 minute mark, the horns come in and the *Sgt. Pepper/Pet Sounds* influences make themselves known. These influences remain throughout, and if those bands appeal to you and you don't mind a heaping handful of electronic effects, this one may be worth your time to check out.

[YouTube: The Earlies- Enemy Chorus \(Live at Greenman Festival\)](#)



**14. Andrew Bird - Armchair Apochrypha** - Seriously, could there be more animal names represented in this year's list? Anyway, I feel like Andrew Bird is taunting me with how much he whistles on this record- I can't whistle, never could. That aside, this is one really good album- melodic, inventive, both familiar and new. I mean, if there's whistling, it's likely to be catchy- you can't whistle a tune if it's not catchy, can you? Bird's primary instrument is violin, and there's plenty of that as well. There's a very NPR-type vibe going on here, and that's not necessarily a bad thing. Alternative rock for intellectuals, perhaps?

[YouTube: Andrew Bird- Imitosis](#)



**13. Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings - 100 Days, 100 Nights** - I wonder how many of the folks that scooped up Amy Winehouse's 2006 release *Back To Black* realize that Amy borrowed Sharon Jones' backing band. Ms. Winehouse had a fine album, but as soon as Sharon belts out her first notes, you know this is real deal, old school soul. The album cover looks like it could have been put out by Stax in the late 60's and the music backs it up. This is very retro, but without sounding like a copy- were the recording quality not so good, you'd think this was 40 years old. When you're talking soul, that's a real good thing.

[YouTube: Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings- 100 Days, 100 Nights](#)

[YouTube: Sharon Jones & The Dap Kings- Let The Knock \(Live\)](#)



**12. Pharoahe Monch - Desire** - Released eight years after his debut album, Pharoahe Monch's *Desire* quickly asserts that it was well worth the wait. Gospel, rock, soul, you name it- stylistic influence abound and he uses actual singers and choruses to great effect. The lyrics are intelligent and inspirational without being sappy- his call "to keep pushing" comes off as genuine and a message from someone who's been doing a lot of pushing himself. That he gives equal time to a male vocalist, female vocalist and the Tower of Power horns is a tribute to Monch's desire to put the song before his own ego. His take on Public Enemy's "Welcome To The Terrordome" is a funky horn-led amendment to the original and also an indication of where Pharoahe stands lyrically- more about prose than hos. Rap still suffers from being a singles based format, but efforts like this could change that- let's hope we don't have to wait eight years for his next one. If it takes that long to make it this good, though, I'll be there to pick it up in 2015 on whatever form we're buying music in then...

[YouTube: Pharoahe Monch- Push](#)

[YouTube: Pharoahe Monch- Body Baby](#)



**11. Eleni Mandell - Miracle Of Five** - Doing this list and seeking out new music each year, every now and again I have a "why didn't I know about this person years ago" moment. I had one big time with Eleni Mandell- this is the first I've heard of her and it's album number six. I've batted around "could have been from any time in the past 40 years" a few times- a lot of these tracks could have been from any time in the past 80 years. Torchy at times, sweet at others, jazzy almost throughout, her rich voice warms up her clever lyrics and melds well with the clarinet, drums, piano, vibes, harp and more that pop up from track to track- a Tom Waits comparison is not out of line but doesn't tell the full story. This album was a really pleasant surprise and is sending me out to check out her earlier efforts.

[YouTube: Eleni Mandell- My Twin](#)>

[YouTube: Eleni Mandell- Girls](#)



**10. Architecture In Helsinki - In Case We Die** -Remember Shriekback? That's who this band remind me most of, but since most people don't remember them, Talking Heads will work as well. Architecture In Helsinki (from Australia, which kind of gives you a hint to how off beat they are) is jumpy, twitchy New Wave inspired pop that chirps, skitters, bounces and otherwise dances along and entertains throughout. Synths, tubas, drums, xylophones are among the many instruments the eight members play. I also hear moments that remind me of the spirit of the B-52s and Poi Dog Pondering (the dancy middle period), if not exactly their music. This one has been given less than favorable marks in other reviews but it's my peppy, perky diamond in the

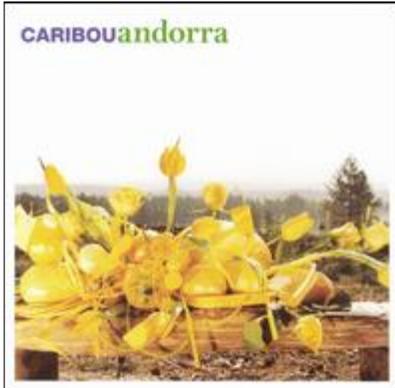
rough.

[YouTube: Architecture In Helsinki- Heart It Races](#)

[YouTube: Architecture In Helsinki- Hold Music](#)

[YouTube: Architecture In Helsinki- Debbie](#)

[YouTube: Dr. Dog Cover Heart It Races \(just audio\)](#)



**9. Caribou - Andorra** - Caribou is that rare animal (sorry) that relies mostly on electronics and synths but doesn't really sound like they do. Essentially one man (Dan Snaith), this album harkens back to the lighter, stars in the eyes side of 60's psych without being derivative. Also unlike most one-man electronic acts, the emphasis is on creating short, catchy songs. Light and breezy but also an album that will stick in your head.

[YouTube: Caribou- Melody Day](#)

[YouTube: Caribou- She's The One](#)



**8. The New Pornographers - Challengers** - On their fourth album, The New Pornographers bring more of their ornate power-pop to the table, but I'd say this one is more of a grower than their previous efforts. Some of the hooks and harmonies stick with you from the beginning, but many become endearing only after repeat listenings. Neko Case's vocals give the songs she takes the lead on a great warmth, and the other vocalists add the right color to the proceedings. If I held off on finishing this list, I could see this album move up one place each additional time I listened to it before the list was completed.

[YouTube: New Pornographers- Challengers](#)

[YouTube: New Pornographers- My Rights Versus Yours \(Live on Letterman\)](#)



**7. M.I.A. - Kala** - M.I.A.'s debut was #8 on my list in 2005, so it would stand to reason that I think both albums are solid but this one may be just a tad better. And I'll back that statement up. While she ultimately cranks up the same reggae/hip-hop/dance/brazilian/african/world/indian hybrid she did on her debut, she refines it a bit more and expands a little- doing a straight cover of a Bollywood track ("Jimmy") and quoting the Modern Lovers lyrically ("Roadrunner" references on "Bamboo Banger") and the Clash musically ("Straight To Hell" on "Paper Planes"). Not a major step forward, but when your style is already miles ahead of what most of your contemporaries are doing, you don't need to put the pedal to the floor. M.I.A. has proved the debut was not a fluke- her next move could be pretty exciting.

[YouTube: M.I.A.- Boyz](#)

[YouTube: M.I.A. - Paper Planes](#)

[YouTube: M.I.A. - Jimmy](#)

[YouTube: M.I.A. - Bird Flu](#)



**6. The Arcade Fire - Neon Bible** - *Funeral* started off as the little record that could, then the next thing you know The Arcade Fire are sharing the stage with Bowie and Springsteen. The celebrity fandom and critical praise is well-deserved, as the songs and playing of their debut full-length stood out as a unique album, not merely just a strong debut. Onto the difficult second album- it was once said "You have your entire lifetime to make your first album, but only 12 months to make the second". This is a challenge that has stumped many bands (The Strokes, I'm looking in your direction) and while this isn't a major departure from the debut, it's definitely not a step backwards. I don't think the songs as quite as sharp here, but there's improvement in both the playing and the production. I'm filing this one under the "If it ain't broke don't fix it" category and I wait impatiently to see what they'll do next.

[YouTube: Arcade Fire- Neon Bible \(Live in an elevator\)](#)

[YouTube: Arcade Fire- Keep The Car Running \(Live on Jonathan Ross\)](#)

[YouTube: Foo Fighters cover Keep TheCar Running](#)



**5. The National - Boxer** - I think I've done pretty well in avoiding the terms "literary" and "cinematic" in describing most of the albums thus far- but here comes The National to put an end to that. When you think each song could be turned into either a short story, independent film or both, you know you have something special, and The National do that on almost every track. The lyrics are extremely literary (there it is again) and the well-thought instrumentation gives each track a cinematic (there's the other one) quality. Matt Berninger's deep vocals add to the mood and serves as the thread which holds all these separate tales together. Another album that makes me anxious for the next one.

[You Tube: The National- Apartment Story](#)

[YouTube: The National- Mistaken for Strangers](#)

[YouTube: The National- Slow Show](#)

[YouTube: The National- Fake Empire \(Live on Letterman\)](#)



**4. Robert Plant & Alison Krauss - Raising Sand** - Well, not only didn't I see this coming, I re-read the release schedule a few times when I saw this one appear. "THAT Robert Plant with THAT Alison Krauss? Really? Huh. I gotta hear that." Wow, does this work. T-Bone Burnett's production and song choices are impeccable, giving the record variety and consistency at the same time. Marc Ribot's guitar is often reminiscent of his work with Tom Waits and often serves as a third voice. But speaking of voices, the real stars here are the voices of Plant and Krauss. Krauss is at turns sweet, soft, soaring or moaning- whatever the

mood of the song dictates, she's on it. Plant really steals the show though, and not the way he did with that one band he was in way back when. He voice is soft and mellow at spots, menacing in others and filling in with harmonies nicely. Some folks go on and on about voices being "instruments" - these two use theirs exceptionally well together. Plant has single-handedly given me hope for all artists whom I feel their best days are well behind them.

[YouTube: Robert Plant, Alison Krauss and T-Bone Burnett on Charlie Rose](#)

[YouTube: Robert Plant and Alison Krauss- Gone Gone Gone \(Baby Done Gone\)](#)



**3. Panda Bear - Person Pitch** - Alright, I used up all my usual "literary" and "cinematic" references in one shot, here's where I do the same with *Pet Sounds*. The Beach Boys' classic is likely my all-time favorite record so albums that sound like it are definitely up my alley. Panda Bear (known to his mama as Noah Lennox) is a founding member of Animal Collective (see #35 above). Their off-beat/experimental/folk nature carries over to Panda's solo work, but his love for Brian Wilson come to the fore. On these seven tracks (two over 12 minutes), P.B. channels Wilson but in a very otherworldly way. Listening to this record, I first thought of *Pet Sounds* as being covered by cavemen, and then later in the same song, as being covered by an advanced race of aliens. I think both are appropriate comparisons, this both an advanced and remedial take on a classic sound. This is definitely an acquired taste record, proceed with caution. Adventurous listeners, dive on in.

[YouTube: Panda Bear- Comfy In Nautica](#)

[YouTube: Panda Bear- Bros \(Edit\)](#)



**2. Spoon - Ga Ga Ga Ga Ga** - Well, this must be the year for sixth albums, as here's the sixth from Austin, Texas based Spoon. I guess you could call their overall sound alternative power pop, and they add dashes of Motown and soul to the proceedings here, leading to their best album to date. Their songs have always been sharp, but they're refined even further here and have more range of emotion than on previous records. The first two tracks are classic Spoon, and the third "You Got Yr. Cherry Bomb" has Motown written all over it, from the driving rhythm section to the horn section. "Underdog" sounds like previous Spoon efforts to start, but then picks up more instruments and gets a full horn section after the chorus. I've read comparisons of Spoon to Wilco, which makes sense but doesn't tell the whole story. The bands are quite similar in how they stake claim in a very straight ahead rock/pop territory, but then experiment with the form. Oddly, the Texas based Spoon lacks some of the twang that Wilco has/had, and adds a little more of a bass groove to the proceedings.

In my opinion, the best album by a band who keeps making better records.

[YouTube: Spoon - The Underdog](#)

[YouTube: Spoon- The Ghost of You Lingers](#)



**1. LCD Soundsystem - Sound Of Silver** - Just as rap suffers from the "great as singles, rough in album form" dilemma, so does electronic music, at least that you can file under the "popular music" heading. LCD Soundsystem is trying to put an end to that- their debut in 2005 worked well from start to finish, and this record, the follow up, does it a hundred times better. I think part of the key is to have fewer songs- there's only 9 here- and make the ones you have longer and better. Another is to vary the styles- there's pure disco, new wave, krautrock and variations of them all throughout this album. Finally, for me, it comes back to the songs themselves- if you don't have the tunes, well, it's hard to have a good record. From the Eno/Bowie sound of opening "Get Innocuous!", the jittery, minimalist "Time To Get Away", the wry, electro-funk of "North American Scum", the dreamy-but-heartbreaking "Someone Great", to the "Baba O' Riley" meets indie rock "All My Friends", the first five songs come at you like a greatest hits record. The next four tracks are no slouches, either, including the quiet/loud/quiet closer "New York, I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down". This album surpasses the electronic/dance tag and is just a great album, period.

[YouTube: LCD Soundsystem- All My Friends](#)

[YouTube: LCD Soundsystem: Someone Great](#)

[YouTube: LCD Soundsystem- North American Scum](#)

[YouTube: Franz Ferdinand's Cover of All My Friends](#)

And my top six compilations:



**5. Eccentric Soul- Twinight's Lunar Rotation** - The Numero Group unearths another collection of obscure soul from the late 60s/early 70s, this time a two CD set from Chicago's Twinight label.



**4. The Sandinista Project** - A diverse class featuring some Mekons, Camper Van Beethoven and Katrina (minus The Waves) cover The Clash's oft maligned 3 record set from start to finish.

[YouTube: Sex Clark Five- Career Opportunities](#)



**3. People Take Warning! Murder Ballads & Disaster Songs 1919-1938** - These three discs- broken up as Man vs. Machine, Man vs. Nature and Man vs. Man- tell true tales of murder and disaster from the early 20th Century.



**2. Song Of America** - I never thought I'd be mentioning Janet Reno in the Timmys (unless I was comparing the physique of a bass player in a Swediss garage band, perhaps), but here she is. She masterminded this excellent collection of songs that tell the history of the U.S., from Yankee Doodle to The Message.

[YouTube: Jake Shimburkuro plays Stars and Stripes Forever on the ukelele](#)



**1. I'm Not There Original Soundtrack** - It says a lot about a songwriter when the covers are consistently good, and Dylan leads the pack in this category. This album boasts a who's who of indie rock today (plus Willie Nelson for good measure). The ladies steal the show here, with a close second being Calexico's backing on several tracks.

## 2008 Early Warning

Keeps your eyes and ears on Vampire Weekend- their self-released CD-R almost made it near the top of my charts, but then I saw the proper release came out in late January of this year, so I held off. Ivy League grads mix African guitars and rhythms with pop culture references and humor, the end result sounding something like Camper Van Beethoven covering Paul Simon's *Graceland*. Good stuff.

[YouTube: Vampire Weekend- A-Punk](#)

[YouTube: Vampire Weekend- Mansard Roof](#)