

the cut

March 2016

*DARUVA
KRISHNA*

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Editor-in-Chief	Arun Marsten
Assistant Editor	Imogen Todd
Design/Layout Director	Sharon Yu
Photo Editor	Lucy Denegre
Copy Director	Danielle Maly
Public Relations Chief	Donovan Powers
Web Editor	Christopher Schuler
Writing Staff	Brooke Ley, David Dwyer, Ali Kidwai, Evi Bernitsas, Donovan Powers, Chris Schuler, Dhruva Krishna, Andrew Kim, Arun Marsten, Lucy Denegre, Imogen Todd
Photo Staff	Mark Egge, Katherine Martinez, Tiffany Jiang, Lucy Denegre
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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



Right now, I'm sitting at Commonplace freezing my ass off while I write this letter, and I honestly can't tell if my teeth are chattering or I'm gritting them because I'm furious that this is the Steel City's idea of April. You'd think that between Hillary Clinton coming to CMU and someone painting "Donald Trump 2016" on the fence, all of the political heat on campus would help offset the snowy weather, but I'm still #feelingthebern of frozen fingers on my bike to and from campus.

Thankfully, all the cool stuff happening at The Cut this month has helped me soldier on! This month we went to see Foals at the Petersen Events Center for their Spring Fling show with Cage the Elephant. We also got to see Titus Andronicus at Cattivio and Dr. Dog at Stage AE. For those of you who know him, it should come as no surprise that Donovan Powers was Arizona ice tea-ing it with the best of them at the Altar Bar when Yung Lean came to town. Thankfully he didn't stick around long enough to see the immortal sadboi's tour bus get shot at by some

locals (this is why we can't have nice things).

In the field of music journalism, there are some tough questions that get asked, and there are some dirty jobs that no one wants to do. That's why I feel it's important to give a special shout out to Brooke Ley, who took on the task of writing about why pop country has gotten a reputation in recent years of being trash music for garbage people. It wasn't pretty (it turns out country trap exists, and you can't unhear it), but I think she got some good results. To balance out the ire, David Dwyer wrote a love letter to K-pop, and new kid on the block Ali Kidwai decided to drop some knowledge about J Dilla's posthumous releases and intellectual property rights in general. To top it all off we've got reviews of the new Kendrick and Zayn albums along with a few others like Pinkshinyultrablast and Pine Groves.

So while the weather might not be what you've come to expect from April, I think this month's issue more than makes up for it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arun". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end.

Arun Marsten
Editor-in-Chief
The Cut Magazine

Recommended Albums



Top Row from Left to Right: *Spirit Phone* by Lemon Demon, *iii* by Miiike Snow, *99¢* by Sanitgold, *Heron Oblivion* by Heron Oblivion, *A Good Night in the Ghetto* by Kamaiyah

Bottom Row from Left to Right: *No Worry No Mind* by B Boys, *The Wilderness* by Explosions in the Sky, *untitled unmastered.* by Kendrick Lamar, *The Wedding Album* by Radiator Hopsital and Great Thunder, *Le Dernier Crepuscule* by Chethe'ilist

Songs You Need To Hear

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Lipslap | Kero Kero Bonito |
| 2 | Do It, Try It | M83 |
| 3 | Meticulous Bird | Thao & The Get Down Stay Down |
| 4 | Brooklyn's Own | Joey Bada\$\$ |
| 5 | Mana Island | DOTS |
| 6 | Beneath Fields | Heron Oblivion |
| 7 | One Love | Kamaiyah |
| 8 | Touch of Grey | The War on Drugs |
| 9 | Disintegration Anxiety | Explosions in the Sky |
| 10 | Freedom Interlude | Noname |



Music News

By Chris Schuler

✂ Frank Ocean apparently had a listening party for his album, so it'll probably be ready for release in early 3017.

✂ Speaking of albums that will take hundreds of years to produce, The Avalanches have updated their website and their photos on all social media platforms. Let the hype machine begin!

✂ According to the RIAA, artists made more money from vinyl record sales than from music streaming last year. To be fair, though, PHI probably still made more money than artists did from streaming services last year.

✂ South by Southwest ended with a (thankfully victimless) shooting this year, reminding attendees that no matter how many hipsters cram into Austin, the festival is still in Texas.

✂ Jack Lowden, a Scottish actor, was picked to star in the upcoming Morrisey biopic. We were unable to reach the singer for comment, but if we did he probably would have said something like "I shan't think I'll be happy with this blimey rodder, chum."

✂ A hacker took over the instagram account of Young Thug's fiancée, holding it hostage until he released a new mixtape. It's ridiculous, since we all know we're getting at least 10 Thug tapes this year anyway

✂ In local news, **SADBOYS** turned into **MADBOYS** after Young Lean's tour bus was shot at after a show at the Altar Bar.

✂ Hamburger Helper dropped a mixtape for April Fools Day, prompting "that guy" on your Facebook feed to use the fire emoji wayyyyyyy more than anyone ever should.

✂ Andrew W.K. just filed the paperwork to start a new political party, the "Party Party," joining a long American political tradition of clinging to a schtick nobody else cares about for way too long.

WHY IS COUNTRY MUSIC SO BAD?

By Brooke Ley

We've all heard it before. "I like every genre of music... except country." (Sometimes rap will also be lumped here, but that's a different discussion.) Not only is this statement unhelpful as a description of musical taste, it's also probably untrue, unless you truly are a fan of grindcore, vaporwave, and Mongolian throat singing. Even further, it seems strange that someone would want to deprive themselves of an entire genre of music that has such a strong history in America. Even by pointing that out, though, I'm being hypocritical - if someone asked me if I were a country fan, I would have to respond with a definitive "no." I'll listen to Johnny Cash and enjoy the more twangy style of Frank Fairfield, but when I overhear some Luke Bryan I can't help but cringe. So why is it that I, along with many others, want to be distanced from country?

The first factor, I think, is that the word "country" usually denotes a style that is actually only a subset of the genre. When someone is asked if they like country, the first image in most people's heads isn't that of Johnny Cash, but rather one more akin to "bro-country." Bro-country is a genre that emerged in the 2010s and is most commonly associated with "attractive young women, the consumption of alcohol, partying, and pickup trucks" according to Wikipedia. It's not surprising that bro-country has eclipsed the rest of the banjo-loving landscape, as it is estimated that 45% of country's best-selling songs fall under this heading. Bro-country's association with the genre is leading older generations of country singers to speak out against it. What makes bro-country so bad then?

One possibility is that bro-country is just too formulaic. One artist, Gregory Todd, emphasized this by creating a mash-up of songs by Blake Shelton, Luke Bryan, Cole Swindell, Parmalee, Florida Georgia Line, and Chase Rice that depicts their overwhelming similarities - lines from different songs sound like variations on a theme. While this may be a valid criticism, it doesn't explain why country, rather than other cookie-cutter genres, takes all the flack. And since I don't listen to bro-country, my distaste for it is hardly supported by the belief that it is unoriginal, considering I don't have many songs for comparison. There seems to be something more than this driving my country-aversion.

Another criticism of bro-country is its subject matter. This is one of the biggest issues older country fans and musicians take with the genre, as they believe that the constant discussion of trucks and partying is both separating country from its roots and creating an unwelcome stereotype. Further, many of the songs objectify women to the point that they seem to be nothing more than objects to wear blue jeans and ride in the back of your truck while you sip your ice cold beer. While watching bro-country music videos for this article, I spotted an uncomfortable amount of Confederate flags, i.e. more than zero. Still, I find myself unsatisfied with this answer; many songs I listen to have unrelatable or negative themes. When listening to bro-country, I seem to have a definitive problem with the sound that makes it tough for me to listen to.

In trying to figure out the problem I had with the bro-country sound, I put on my favorite country album, the soundtrack to *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, in hopes of determining a difference between this album and the bro-country hits I was listening to. I'd argue that by comparing the two, I have found that the problem isn't in the accented voices or the instruments used, as these seem to remain constant between the two. However, for this "better" country music, I have found that both the voices and the instruments have the power to stand on their own, something that I don't think could be said for bro-country. Despite bro-country being garbage, I think that the genre of country can still be respected and should not be defined by it.

A LOVE LETTER TO K-POP

Dear K-Pop,

I've been obsessed with you recently, and you know I've been obsessed with you before. This time, I took a step back and asked myself why I like you so much. It wasn't just that your performances and music videos always manage to create a decadent spectacle, and it wasn't just because of your overwhelming sugariness. It's because of your jumble of confusing contradictions.

You devote yourself wholeheartedly to many products, one of which is the music, but another important one is the stars themselves. They infamously go through rigorous audition processes in order to be considered for a position in a group. The members of groups maintain carefully controlled looks and public personas, to an allegedly startling and dangerous level. Knowing all of this, you'd think I would be repulsed and make me reconsider my obsession with you - it doesn't. I don't condone the unhealthy lengths some go to achieve perfection, but I am still intrigued. What confuses and entices me is that your music doesn't quite fit with your image. You are just as manufactured as American pop, but your music is deeply experimental. This completely

contrasts with the culture surrounding pop music; your music is far from generic. f(x)'s "Shadow" features a sample that sounds like an old Hollywood musical, a disco bassline, and a chorus full of tight harmonies that pulls out the tension between all of these elements. It's impressive, and I'm often found mumbling along to its lyrics that I don't quite understand or even know.

You're attractive because of the assumption that pop is generic and bland. You're attractive because your music is some of the most experimental music I've ever listened to, and because this challenging music is coming from manufactured stars from the production line. The manufactured and the experimental don't line up, and that's why I'm writing this letter to you right now. Your music is delightful and full of conflict. I look forward to a time when the majority of pop is as beautifully challenging as you. Thank you, K-Pop, for setting the standard so high. I will never approach pop music the same way again.

Love,
David Dwyer
A Fan

By David Dwyer

THE GHOST OF J DILLA

By Ali Kidwai

J Dilla, the legendary hip-hop producer involved with such acts as A Tribe Called Quest, Madlib, and Erykah Badu, has been dead for ten years, but sometimes you can hardly tell. Dilla's death has been followed by a slate of posthumous albums and compilations, and, not surprisingly, by a lot of merchandise; Stones Throw just released a 10th-anniversary edition of *Donuts*, Dilla's last studio album, and Rappcats recently had J Dilla action figures for sale on their website, in addition to a regular stock of t-shirts and sweatshirts bearing Dilla's name. Adding to my skepticism about their motives the upcoming release of *The Diary*, the latest of over a half dozen posthumous releases from Dilla's estate. At this point, I can't help but ask: Is it okay to sell a dead man's stuff like this?

I'm tempted to say "no." Some part of me wants to be cynical and say that Dilla's estate and record label shouldn't profit from his intellectual property, and that doing so is disrespectful to his legacy and death. But I've gotta say - Dilla was one of the best, and

his work still holds up over a decade after its initial production. Dilla's work has been posthumously sampled by DOOM and Joey Bada\$\$, among others, and his beats are always stellar. I've also come across some pretty amazing stories about Dilla's family, who manage his estate: J Dilla's mother used to bring crates of records to his deathbed on his request so that he could continue to work on his music, even at the very end; his brother released a tribute album, *Yancey Boys*, in 2008; some even say that the name for *Donuts* came from Dilla's uncle, who would regularly give donuts to Dilla when he was a child.

I'm finding it hard to be cynical. Artists like J Dilla don't come around often. The fact that Dilla is still relevant today is a testament to the immense impact he had on the hip-hop community, and I have a lot of respect for the people in his life that helped that happen. I've seen plenty of poorly managed estates, but Dilla's is not one of them - he devoted his life to music, and it only makes sense for his legacy to be honored by it.





Dr. Dog at Stage AE
Photograph by Tiffany Jiang



Dr. Dog at Stage AE
Photograph by Tiffany Jiang

Spring Fling 2k16

By Daniel Deluca

Cage the Elephant. Silversun Pickups. Foals. Bear Hands. When I saw the lineup for the Spring Fling tour, I immediately bought tickets and come the day of the show, it did not disappoint. Despite a rather tame crowd during Bear Hands' strong opening set, they gave a good indication of what was to come that night. They set the stage perfectly for Foals who performed a variety of hits including "What Went Down," "Mountain At My Gates," and a stirring performance of "Inhaler," which got the crowd moving. Their exhilarating performance left the crowd on a musical high leading into Silversun Pickups. Although I had heard many of their old songs, I had not heard much of the new album so I didn't know exactly what to expect. However, led by lead singer Brian Aubert, they performed an incredible set. His quirky mannerisms were oddly compelling and completely mesmerized the crowd. This was especially noticeable during the performances

of "Lazy Eye" and "Panic Switch" which did not require a massive light show as they stood out on their own. After that, the time had finally come for Cage the Elephant to conclude the night in style. Performing "In One Ear" second, they brought the crowd into a frenzy which would carry on throughout the rest of their set. They played their classics as well as many new songs. Every member of the band was clearly enjoying themselves, and the crowd fed off of this. Several mosh pits showed the drastic transition from the initially subdued audience that had come to casually enjoy the music. On their final song, Matt Schulz stage dove which resulted in fans trying desperately to grab onto him. The overall experience differed between artists, but never disappointed, and all the sets worked well together. Each group showed their respective talents, and even though I mainly went for Foals and Cage the Elephant, I left wanting to become a bigger fan of all the bands.

Yung Lean

By Donovan Powers

Of all the concerts I have been to during my time here at CMU, Yung Lean will have been by far one of the most memorable. Yung Lean, internet meme-personified cloud rapper from Sweden, graced us all with his presence at the Altar Bar as a part of his Warlord tour promoting his new album.

The crowd really made the night. I have never seen such a diverse group of people before. We had memesters in vaporwave brotanks who were there because they thought the idea of Yung Lean was funny, but on the other end there was a significant crowd decked out in sadboys gear and Swedish flags who clearly saw nothing humorous about their god Yung Lean, and this diametric opposition would lead to conflict throughout the night. A fist fight broke out as I left the venue. One guy demanded another guy give him his parents phone number so he could tell them what a terrible person their son was. He was completely serious, and when denied, punched the other concert-goer until cops broke it up. Gold.

Ahead of me in line to get into the venue was a group of scruffy looking college kids shouting lyrics at each other while figuring

out how to best hide the weed they planned to smuggle into the venue. I couldn't peel myself away from them as we waited, it was as if I was watching a Discovery Channel documentary on some African tribe whose customs were completely foreign to me. Don't get me wrong, I'm not pulling the "I'm white and rap culture is weird" card. It just feels like a weird contrast to everything Yung Lean is. At one point, I witnessed the most college thing of my life as one of their group called an Uber while waiting in line, and promised his friends he would be back for the show after he "banged this chick real quick." As he opened the door to his carriage, he turned to the line and shouted "Wait for me Fam, I'll be right back after I bang this chick." It was a piece of performance art unlike any I had seen before.

The show itself had highs and lows. The opener was comically bad and listening to his set was a chore. Then he was gone. Yung Lean came out covered in fake blood for some reason, played all his hits, and kept repeating what a beautiful night it was. If you like Yung Lean, it was a good show, if you don't, it wasn't.

CONCERT REVIEWS

Dr. Dog

I'll admit it—I was skeptical to see Dr. Dog at first. Nothing against their new stuff, but when I saw them in 2014 they were promoting *B-Room*, which is one of my favorite albums ever, and they put on one of the best live shows ever. Dr. Dog's performance the evening of March 16th not only proved me wrong, but reminded me why they continue to be genre-defining geniuses.

Dr. Dog's set blended material from their newest album, *The Psychedelic Swamp*, and past work. The band (and the audience) blazed through newer tracks like "Bring My Baby Back" and "Fire on My Back," with frontmen Scott McMicken and Toby Leamen seamlessly taking turns on lead vocals. The band also pulled out classics like "Nellie" from *B-Room*, "Old Black Hole" from *Be The Void*, "Jackie Wants A Black Eye" from *Shame, Shame* and even "The Breeze" from *Fate*. This impressive hodgepodge of songs showed the band was just as comfortable playing their new stuff as the old.

"I never thought I'd be playing this song on stage twenty years later."

Craig Finn closed his set by waxing philosophical for a few seconds before launching into "Nassau Colliseum," a song from his long-defunct first band Lifter Puller and a fitting end to the veteran rocker's set. It sounded great, especially considering the now middle-aged Finn was just a college student when he wrote the lyrics.

But despite their excellent performance, Finn and his band were little more than a footnote on Titus Andronicus' massive tome of a show. Frontman Patrick Stickles began with a rambling speech about respecting the other people in the crowd, a sentiment definitely appreciated by veterans of many Pittsburgh venues. After that, he launched into the drawn-out, drowsy introduction to "No Future Part III." Halfway through the song, the band exploded into full-on punk mode and proceeded to plow through many of the livelier songs from their newest album, *The Most Lamentable Tragedy*, without missing a beat.

The cohesiveness of Dr. Dog's live experience impressed me. From the retro, disco-esque lights to the color-changing lights of the drums and the keyboards, Dr. Dog brought their live show to a whole new level. Although they sometimes gave the impression of letting the reins loose, Dr. Dog showed they were veterans of the live show and dominated the crowd. The band was the ringleader of the night, guiding a captivated audience through foot-stomping singalongs, slow blues jams, and upbeat pop songs. The music, the visuals, and even the crowd pulsated together to become a single living environment at points. In many ways the concert transcended into Dr. Dog's "psychedelic swamp."

I would critique the sound of the band. This is subjective, but at moments everything seemed a bit too rehearsed and not as gritty as I would have liked. Yet, Dr. Dog has done the near impossible. They have stayed relevant for nearly two decades, and continue to put out increasingly ambitious new music with increasingly ambitious live shows. I guess you can teach an old dog new tricks.

Sweaty and panting, the band stopped for a break while Stickles prepared for another (likely called-for) rant. But before he could, an audience member interrupted, climbing onto the stage with a song request. The band talked him down, and launched into another unrelenting set.

TA shows can easily seem intimidating for a newcomer - usually, a horde of devoted fans in the audience shout along to every line of Stickles' verbose lyrics. Luckily, the band can write an undeniable song, allowing even unfamiliar members of the audience to jump around with the riffs and chant the angry and cathartic choruses.

The band closed the set by bringing up Finn for a cover of the Replacement's "Bastards of Young". The song, which remained respectful of the original but maintained TA's undeniable aggression, was a great way to close out the show: two giants of modern punk looking back a generation without sacrificing any of their signature energy. The show was tight and loud, and while my ears were ringing for days, "Dimed Out" will be in the back of my mind for much longer.

By Dhruva Krishna

Titus Andronicus

By Chris Schuler

MY LIFE AS AN AUDIOPHILE

By Andrew Kim

“Music is a gift, it is a universal emotional language that allows us to feel. It brings us closer to ourselves and others in that it creates an avenue for empathy and understanding. It can often communicate something that cannot be put into words, a resonance of the spirit and a recognition that another feels what you feel and understands.”

This is a post I came across one day on my Quora feed, and it perfectly embodies objective of the audiophile community.

Old artists and producers used to go through hell and back in order to produce this emotional energy. They would pick out a specific microphone to capture the unique details of the animal known as Aretha Franklin’s vocals without taming it, or pray that a specific mixing board would capture the crying of Gary Moore’s electric guitar. They would run enough cables to choke all the cows in Iowa throughout a house so that John Bonham’s drums in “When the Levee Breaks” would be powerful enough to break through the MP3 files and through your shitty \$20 earphones just so that your head would move to the beat and send hairs standing behind your necks. Old producers used to go through all nine rings of Dante’s Inferno, but for what? Modern iterations of audio compression designed not for audio quality but for optimal file size?

Beats by Dr. Dre headphones? How does any of this do justice for all the 48 hour studio sessions that artists and producers had to go through to make one song? And you thought your 112 project was going to kill you?

Enter the audiophile community. The group of people who are dedicated to make the music sound right. We are the believers in Hi-Fi, the cult of AKG, the ones who will look at you dead in the eye and say “Look at my stack of Schiit*!”. We are the ones who look at you like an idiot for wearing Bose headphones and for claiming that they’re the best headphones ever (go flush your head in a toilet if you ever say that to my face) as we rub the dust off of the brushed aluminum finish of our Beyerdynamic DT 880s. Yes, we are cocky. But for a good reason. Audiophiles spend anywhere between \$200 to even thousands of dollars to buy amplifiers, Digital to Analogue Converters (DACs), headphones, turntables, and more in order to recreate Hi-Fi audio, or a recreation of sound that is most faithful to what the producers created.

Are we purists? Yes. Are we idiots for spending a lot of money on audio equipment? Not as much as the idiots who paid \$120 for Kanye West’s white t-shirt. But all of that equipment is worth it. I hear and feel the smallest of pleasures

that most people won’t be able to. The low end rumble of headphone drivers that my ears can’t pick up from a bass drum. The lack of any sizzle and distortion that comes from crappy MP3 compressions. The subtle joy and anticipation that comes from creating a FLAC file from physical CDs. The feeling of euphoria when everything in my dorm room goes quiet and I’m finally sitting in the front row seat of a Led Zeppelin concert.

My view of people listening to music is like watching acts of injustice. People who own expensive pairs of headphones and still listen 128kbps MP3 files. Hip Hop and bass-heads who will try on amazing headphones and toss them aside and dismiss them as bassless and meatless. People who say that modern musicians are talented despite their audio engineers putting all of their inputs through a digital interface and then through ProTools to mask out all imperfections and effectively change all parts of a raw instrument or voice. These people unknowingly suck the soul out of what music should be.

We have all seen the comedy video where the sound engineer performs acrobats to make a tone-deaf singer sound like Whitney Houston. That is the reality of modern music and the reason why there is a lot of salt within the audiophile community. That is

“Audiophiles are progressively being put in a tight spot. As modern music now accepts social media and modern technology, there is no longer an incentive to create music fitted for audiophiles. “

also the reason why I don't understand modern music. Jack White tackles his instruments and recording gear through all their imperfections because he wants his music to be a fight between himself and his hands in order to get whatever emotion he feels to the listener. There is always a bit of effort that needs to go into music, whether it be skill or talent on the musician's side or on the production side. And when there is a “fuck-up” on either side, Audiophiles can listen to these and treasure them as easter eggs born from human imperfections. How can emotions be honest when they aren't pure? Old productions were honest. 2 inch tape recorders couldn't be edited with ProTools or through audio-engineering wizardry. In those days only the talented or skilled could put out records that were worthy of being listened to. Now there are “musicians” who rely on their audio-engineers to make them sound perfect, effectively becoming digital cyborgs.

Audiophiles are progressively being put in a tight spot. As modern music now accepts social media and modern technology, there is no longer an incentive to create music fitted for audiophiles. People don't focus on the production aspect of music as they used to, and much like my home country of Korea the majority of the audiophile community is getting older. “Talent” as a word is

being thrown around like a beach ball as imperfections are masked out in production. Modern Pop stars don't experiment with certain mixing boards or microphones, and no one other than the Foo Fighters touches the 2 inch tape recording machine.

I love music and I love being an audiophile. Everyone loves music and although I don't want everyone to be an audiophile, everyone should start listening closer, notice the details that they aren't hearing because what they're listening to isn't human but a reproduction of “feels” that record companies want them to share on social media to do the marketing for them. I also want to see one less Bose headphone on the way from Doherty to Baker, but like everything else in life I can't ask for too much.

*www.schiit.com

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wedn
3 Pure Bathing Culture at Club Cafe	4	5	6
10	11	12 Ra Ra Riot at Mr. Small's	13
17 Parquet Courts at Spirit Hall	18 The Dandy Warhols at Mr. Small's	19	20
24	25	26	27 Riff Raff at Re

April

Wednesday

Thursday

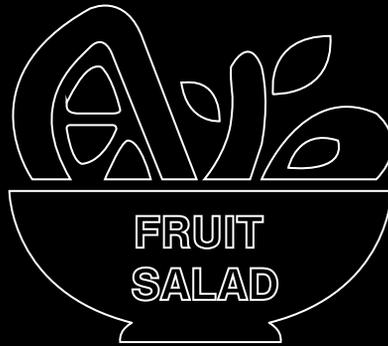
Friday

Saturday

		1	2
	7	8	9
	14 Murder by Death at Mr. Small's	15 GRiZ and Dan Deacon at CMU	16 Wilkins Block Party (Memphis Hill, Dhruva Krishna, and others) at Wilkins Ave.
	21	22	23
xx Theater	28 Deerhunter at Mr. Small's	29 Frankie Cosmos and Eskimeaux at Mr. Roboto Project	30



Titus Andronicus at Cattivo
Photograph by Lucy Denegre



**“I Heard It Through The Grapevine”
by Marvin Gaye**

This song also says ‘honey’ a lot and that could probably go in a fruit salad.

Brooke Ley

**“Hollaback Girl”
by Gwen Stefani**

This song is Bananas, B-A-N-A-N-A-S!

Lucy Denegre

**“Peaches”
by The Presidents of the
United States of America**

90s Alternative Rock Flash Mob in the Canned Fruit Aisle

Mark Egge

**“Peaches and Cream”
by Beck**

A wonderfully weird track about dreams and garbage men (and fruit, of course).

Imogen Todd

**“In the Summertime”
by Mungo Jerry**

You get to wear fruit suits when you play this song in Just Dance.

Paige O’Riordan

**“Teaches of Peaches”
by Peaches**

Because I like my fruit middle aged and provocative

Donovan Powers

**“Strawberry Fields Forever”
by The Beatles**

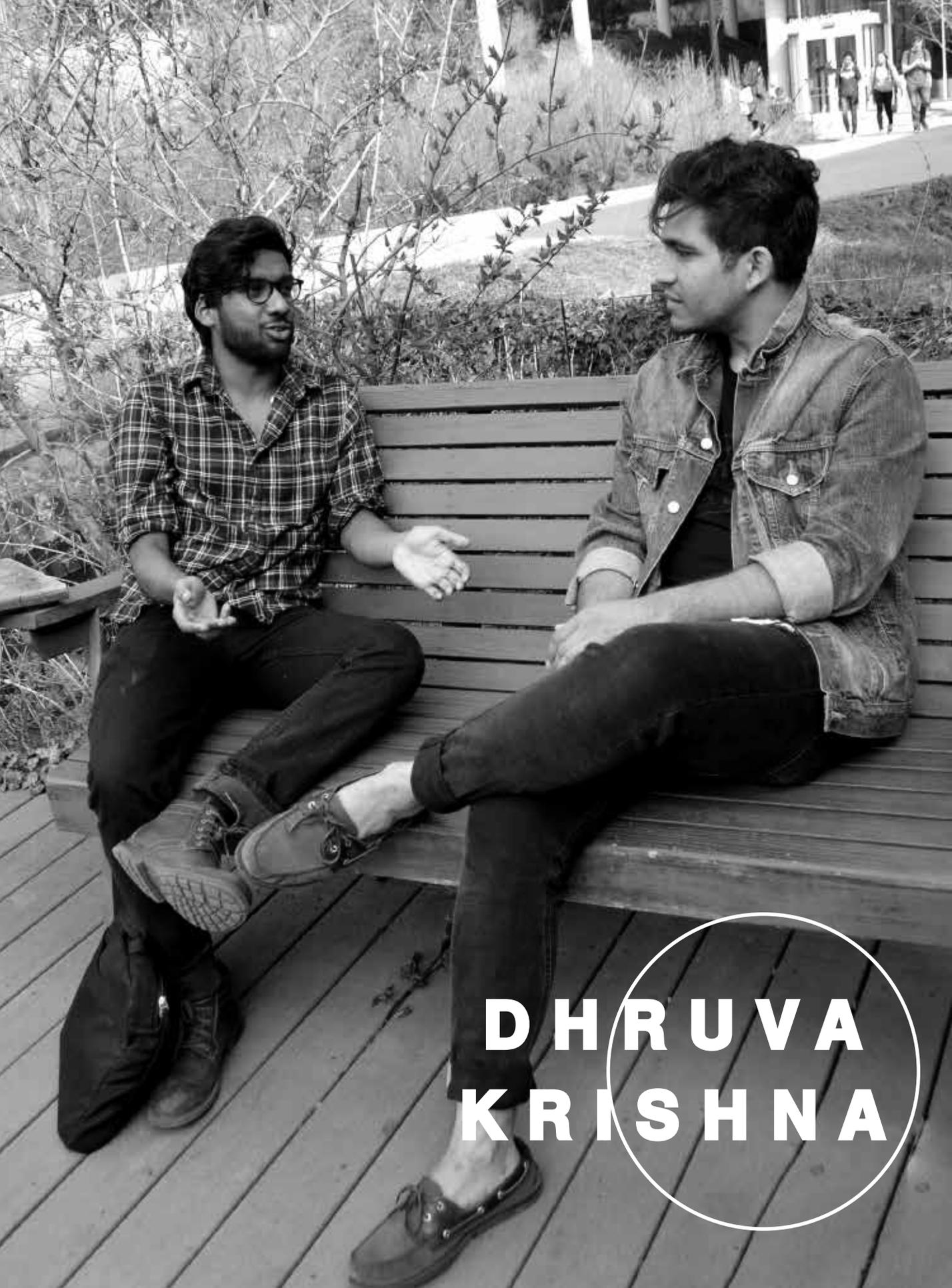
How can fruit salad be real if nothing is real?

Arun Marsten

**“Fruit Salad”
by The Wiggles**

It tastes so good that you just can’t beat it (Uh huh uh)

Anonymous



**DHRUVA
KRISHNA**



TC: So Dhruva, I feel like I've been seeing you all over social media. How many bands are you actually involved in right now?

Dhruva Krishna: Right now I'm involved in three bands primarily. There's Eastend Mile, which is my primary band, Manic Soul, which is a more bluesy kind of old school thing, and Dhruva Krishna and the Family Band, which is my own personal stuff.

TC: Are you studying music at all?

DK: No, my majors are professional writing and pre law, so no music there, but I try to incorporate them into booking stuff, writing concert reviews, and everything else.

TC: So you just got to know Riccardo Schulz, the head of the Vlahakis studio on campus, through wanting to record?

DK: Right! I got to know Riccardo because I recorded in the studio freshman year and he just liked me a lot. We have a close relationship now and we keep working with each other. He's a really cool guy because he knows everyone in the Pittsburgh music scene. For example, both Beauty Slap and Bergman got together through Riccardo. He's a really great nexus point for people to meet and interact.

TC: Speaking of the Pittsburgh scene, you're also booking now, on top of playing, right?

DK: Yeah, so in the midst of doing booking for my bands I realized I was pretty good at it. It's amazing how some bands are really bad at booking in so many different ways. Past just the initiative to reach out and actually do the work of typing emails and reaching out, just professionalism is an issue. But when you're at Carnegie Mellon, professionalism is everywhere. I think that helped me a lot when I was booking. Even though I was young, I think a lot of people I worked with appreciated that I was organized. Now that I'm working with bands, some of them will email me like, "Hey yo, you got a spot for my band?" No music attached, no details, and I'm just thinking, "I don't even know if I want to work with you."

TC: So what kind of shows have you been booking recently?

DK: One thing I'm doing now, maybe it's just because of the year, is tribute shows. For example, I put on the Neutral Milk Hotel show with Good Vibrations booking, which is my own personal thing. It was pretty fun because it's really cool to hear local artists do artists that I like. There's also a second aspect to that, which is, especially in Pittsburgh, if you're not in the local music scene it might be a little hard for you to delve into it. I feel like if someone went to a local tribute concert and they hear a great band it can kind of help them ease into the scene, just because the songs are already

familiar to them. But they can hear these great bands and that's kind of a next step into getting into the music scene. I think one of the biggest things in any local scene is getting audiences who aren't familiar with local music to want to come to shows. They'll think, "Why would I want to see this person when I could see someone I already know?" So I think by doing things like tribute shows, especially for bands like Neutral Milk Hotel, or The Beatles and The Beach Boys shows I have coming up, it's a good way for people to get into the scene and listen to new bands.

TC: Getting people to get more involved in the local music scene is definitely difficult. Were you playing basements and house shows when you started out?

DK: So I was a little disillusioned with the DIY scene, just because when I worked with Eastend and my other bands I generally played licensed venues. I tried playing a few DIY shows, and the people who do it are great, but if you're booking 5, 6, 7 shows a week and you're not making any profit from it, or just the touring band is able to get 40 bucks from a show, to me that's just inefficient. So when I started doing my own booking, I decided to keep that in mind. I thoroughly believe that there's nothing wrong with making a profit at DIY shows. There's nothing wrong with selling tickets and making sure every band gets paid, not just the touring band. I think there's nothing wrong

with keeping a cut for yourself, because at the end of the day I'm doing work also. Also as an artist, I know that there's nothing worse than playing a crazy house show and not getting paid, or getting paid ten dollars for hours of work.

TC: It seems like having less money involved might make a good low pressure environment for bands that are less practiced.

DK: Definitely. One of the bigger things for me with Good Vibrations is making the scene more profitable, and I don't think that's bad. Some people might say, "Oh it's not about the money," and ok fine it's not about money, it's about the music, but money is central to making music. I work with a lot of people who do this full time, and all these promotion agencies, no matter who they are, have this central idea that if you want to do this full time you have to make money doing it. If you're not making any money making music you have to get another job, and that limits your time. So if you're an artist who wants to take that next step and start playing venues like The Rex Theater or Cattivo, I want Good Vibrations to be that step, where you can learn things like how to publicize yourself and how to sell yourself to your audience. I think that's really important and that's why I want to keep doing it.

TC: So in the future do you see yourself pursuing musicianship or management more?

DK: I'm not sure honestly. One of my biggest heroes is Tyler the Creator, because he's as good a businessman as he is a musician. He basically made the Odd Future brand and he still runs that and designs everything, but he's still one of the hypes rappers in the game. I could probably never stop performing, but at the same time I could probably never be a performer full time. I think I've already grown out of the rockstar mindset; I just want to have kids when I'm older and have a stable job, too. I think you can do that, but you'll always hear stories of even the most famous artists *having* to go on tour. Through record labels being shitty, or just being irresponsible, they'll realize they have no money and they're like, "Fuck, we have to go on tour for like three years now, because we have to make up the money." That being said, every time I play on stage I think, "This is what I want to do with my life." I always say this now, but once I played that first drum set on an Eastend show I can't not imagine this being the rest of my life. Yet I still love the business aspect. I think a lot of people are really discouraged by it, because it is a lot of soft skills and networking and there's a lot of sucking face sometimes. Sometimes you have to do things that just suck. You have to come to a lot of shows, you gotta network, and some

people aren't good at that. I really love doing that stuff; I'm a pretty social guy, so I really do enjoy both sides. In short, I don't really know what I'm going to do in the future. In terms of music, it's leaning toward industry just for now, but I could probably never give up playing an instrument just because I love it too much.

TC: Going back to being a student, how is it balancing school and music?

DK: I had a pretty big realization this year. I dropped a lot of things that I used to do. I left my fraternity, which, if you knew me before, was a pretty big thing for me. Slowly dropping almost everything else except for Activities Board right now. Activities Board is just booking music for me, so it's basically the same thing. I think there came a point, especially with Eastend, where I had to make a decision about how serious I wanted this to be. Especially because I do want to do music in the future, and I think a huge thing at CMU is the devaluing of extracurriculars. People kind of see it as an extra thing to do outside of class, but for me my extracurricular is what I want to do with my life. In reality, it's almost backwards for me, where my academics are just tools to help me do my extracurriculars. The things I'm learning in my law and ethics classes are being applied to what I do outside the classroom more. Once I decided I just need to focus on music, everything else just doesn't seem as important to me. It sounds kind of shitty and super objective, but I don't really miss a lot of the things I gave up. It's really hard for me to feel like, "Wow, I miss going to parties on the weekend," when I can have like eight shows over the weekend now, or I can just go to shows. Looking back I've still gone to parties and done the dumb stuff you're supposed to do

“I think there came a point, especially with Eastend, where I had to make a decision about how serious I wanted this to be.”

freshman and sophomore year, but I'd always rather be somewhere like Thunderbird Cafe with my boys who play in some band, and get drinks with them. It can be hard to balance, but at the end of the day what you love and your passions will always shine through.

TC: So what are you recording right now?

DK: Eastend Mile's been doing a lot of stuff and you can check us out at eastendmile.com. We're recording this giant album; it's going to be super fucking hype. I'm not usually flexing, but this album's going to be really damn good. There's a lot of cool people on it and we have a lot of special guests. Look for an album release in late August, early September. We also have a show April 9th at Cattivo, we're playing the Wilkins Block Party April 16th, we're playing my birthday show with Memphis Hill April 30th, and we're playing at James St. May 5th. Manic Soul is also doing some recording stuff. We might have an album early next year or later this year. We already have an EP out from the WRCT set, and we're also playing the Wilkins Block Party. A Dhruva Krishna and the Family Band album is in the works. Not sure how long it's going to take though, because with everything else it always gets bottom listed; but we're also playing the Wilkins Block Party and my birthday show. We have a crazy setlist of just covers on covers on covers of my dream songs.

You can follow Dhruva on Facebook at Dhruva Krishna Music and Good Vibrations Booking



Kendrick Lamar *untitled unmastered.*

By Brooke Ley

untitled unmastered. is Kendrick Lamar's scrap pile. This surprise release features songs titled with only the track number and the approximate date of recording. However, rather than being a bad album of forgotten songs, it only further demonstrates Lamar's skill as a rapper; even his songs that were cut from the last album or existed only in scrap form still manage to make a great project on their own.

If you enjoyed Lamar's last album *To Pimp a Butterfly*, considering that many of these songs were probably going to originate on that album, you will likely also enjoy this. There are definitely familiar sections, for example Anna Wise's parts in "untitled 03" seems similar to portions of "King Kunta". There is still a clear distinction between this album and his last considering that these songs were cut, also leading many of these to be less polished than those on an "official" album. "untitled 07" seems to be three songs in one, with the last one being a studio outtake of Lamar rapping over a repeated bass. Due to this album's nature, it allows for a sense of intimacy and a look into Kendrick Lamar's more experimental pieces.

In terms of experimentation, this album has more jazz and funk sounding pieces than TPAB. "untitled 06" features CeeLo Green and a flute riff that gives it an almost bossa nova feel. This creates an interesting dichotomy with the song that follows "untitled 07" which opens with a chant of "Pimp Pimp! Hooray!" and a more trap feel. However, this just further emphasizes Lamar's talent in being able to tackle different styles. Overall, somehow Kendrick Lamar's scrap pile manages to create an incredible album.



✂✂✂✂✂/5

Zayn Malik *Mind of Mine*

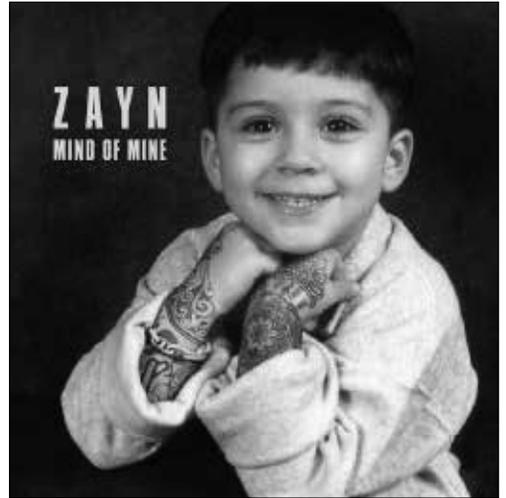
By Lucy Denegre

A year after he broke millions of teen hearts by splitting from One Direction, Zayn Malik has finally put out his first solo release, *Mind of Mine*. I love Zayn. I love his dumb, beautiful face and his highly constructed air of bad boy mystery. His album, however, is mediocre at best. With 18 tracks, an album cover ripped off from Lil Wayne's *Tha Carter III*, and titles like "fOoL fOr YoU" and "BeFoUr," *Mind* is immature and a bit of a mess.

Like many other teen stars trying to make it for real, or ex group members going solo, he's trying desperately to distance himself from his past work. Though it's as accessible and highly produced as 1D's teen-girl-targeted pop rock, *Mind* is more soulful and R&B-influenced, with entirely electronic instrumentation and the occasional dubstep beat. It could be confused with any number of other mainstream pop artists' work, especially Justin Bieber's most recent album.

Despite being lyrically terrible, the songs can be catchy. "PILLOWTALK" has been stuck in my head for a week at this point. "sHe," "BoRdErSz," and "TiO" are some of my other favorites. But I've listened to the album at least five times and I still have no idea which song is which. There are just too many, and they all sound about the same, except for "INTERMISSION: fLoWeR." Minimal and stripped down, it's just Zayn and a guitar. The song is sung in Urdu, Zayn's father's native language and a nod to his Pakistani heritage. It's honestly beautiful, and a breath of fresh air among the other 17 overproduced pop tracks.

I'm mostly disappointed because after he leaked the acoustic "I Won't Mind" in 2015, I was looking forward to an album of more intimate music than anything 1D had to offer. Instead Zayn gave us this, an over-the-top album that's trying too hard to prove he's too cool to be in a boy band. The thing about 1D was that you could blame all the terrible decisions, musical and otherwise, on the publicity machine that pulled all the strings, but it's painfully obvious with *Mind* that Zayn made all these mistakes himself.



✂/5

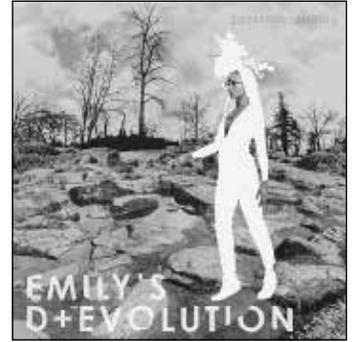
Zayn's Angel Face:

✂ ✂ ✂ ✂ ✂/5

Esperanza Spalding Emily's D+Evolution

By Donovan Powers

Releasing her first album since her famous Grammy upset 4 years ago, jazz vocalist and bass player Esperanza Spalding is back with a new sound on her album, *Emily's D+Evolution*. As a jazzhead I was really excited for her new release, having listened to her last record hundreds of times since it came out, but I have to admit this album was a disappointment for me. It's clear from the first track that she is trying to achieve a harsher and more aggressive sound, but while she does, it comes at the cost of some of the beautiful melodic ideas that her previous projects revolved around. I appreciate Esperanza's willingness to explore new sounds and ideas, but a lot of this album feels like it's trying too hard to be artful. My biggest takeaway after several listens is that she spent too much energy trying to be interesting and forgot to stop along the way to ask if it's enjoyable.



✂✂✂✂/5

Heron Oblivion Heron Oblivion

By Chris Schuler

Heron Oblivion was formed in 2013 by a quartet of psychedelic-rock veterans. Their debut album fuses the pastoral and melodic leanings of drummer and singer Meg Baird with the rest of the band's more aggressive roots. The result is seven drawn-out, jammy songs that veer between airy guitar lines and Sister Ray-style insanity.

It's easy to spot the band's influences. The Velvet Underground is an obvious starting point for the noisier parts of the sound, as is Sonic Youth. The band also recalls both sides of Jefferson Airplane, the folksy hippies and the shredding space cadets. This is especially apparent in Baird, whose vocals have an acid-soaked majesty that would make Grace Slick proud.

This definitely won't be an album for everyone, but if you have a penchant for noise or psychedelia, it's one you should not miss. *Heron Oblivion* might be the headiest 45 minutes cut to wax in years.



✂✂✂✂✂/5

Pinkshinyultrablaster Grandfeathered

By Arun Marsten

Between the liberal application of echo and reverb and vocalist Lyubov Soloveva's soprano, Pinkshinyultrablaster makes no effort to hide the influence of their shoegaze heroes. For the most part, it's a solid album with a dancy, dreamy sound that I can get down to. Unfortunately the guitarist has a tendency to pull you out of a song by entirely changing his tone at random. Tracks like "Glow Vastly", for example, end up sounding choppy and jarring, because the guitarist decided to throw in a crunchy classic rock riff over an otherwise ethereal song. On top of that, the first track is an unexplained chillwave jaunt that on an album of only 8 songs doesn't come off well. *Grandfeathered* is undoubtedly good effort, but at the moment it's looking like the less cool, cliché middle to what might hopefully be a great trilogy.

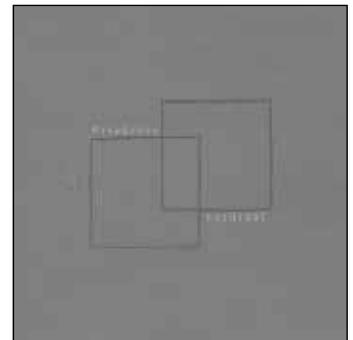


✂✂✂✂✂/5

Pinegrove Old Friends

By Imogen Todd

Usually when Spotify describes an artist's music as "emo-tinged," I quickly navigate away from their page, not eager to relive any middle-school memories. But despite that initial red flag, I found myself, for whatever reason, listening to Pinegrove's newest album. *Cardinal*, the band's major label debut, opens on a promising note with the catchy, if slightly ragged, "Old Friends," an emotional reminder not to let old friends fall by the wayside as you make your way through life. At this point, I thought maybe Spotify's description was actually wrong. Sadly, the rest of the album did indeed live up to that original promise: amid rough vocals, twanging guitars, and the occasional off-putting scream, Pinegrove only delivered a few catchy melodies and one or two solid guitar solos. Unfortunately, this was not enough to elevate the album above its original, unfortunate "emo" status.



✂✂✂✂/5



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