



ERIKA WENNERSTROM
SWEET UNKNOWN
PARTISAN

There's something somewhat frightening, yet utterly freeing when leaving the confines of a successful band to venture solo. Such is the case of **Erika Wennerstrom**, who is taking a brief vacation from **Heartless Bastards** (don't worry: they're not breaking up) to deliver her solo debut **Sweet Unknown**. The album kicks off with the feel-good road trip vibes of "Twisted Highway," which sums up **Wennerstrom's** musical journey (thus far). On somber psych-rock "Staring Out the Window," **Wennerstrom** digs even deeper into the inner workings of her mind. Psych-rock seems to be the order of the day, as these songs are slathered in slow-burning, shoegaze intensity where every languid melody line sounds like it might blow-up an amp. Unsurprisingly, it rules.



HOT SNAKES
JERICHO SIRENS
SUB POP

After a 14-year hiatus from the studio, **Hot Snakes** kick down the door with their new album, **Jericho Sirens**. Throughout **Jericho Sirens**, Rick Froberg commiserates with the frustration and torrential apathy that seems to be a fixture in our daily lives, while also reminding us that we have no fucking clue. Musically, the album incorporates the most extreme fringes of the **Hot Snakes** sound (the vein-bulging, 78-second "Why Don't It Sink In?" the manic, Asian Blues on speed of "Having Another?"), while staying true to longstanding influences such as the Wipers, Dead Moon, Michael Jackson, and Suicide on propulsive tracks such as "Six Wave Hold-Down." Other moments like the choruses of "Jericho Sirens" and "Psychoactive" nod to Status Quo and AC/DC.



YO LA TENGO
THERE'S A RIOT GOING ON
MATADOR

For **Yo La Tengo**, **There's A Riot Going On** is a slow-motion action painting. The group did it all in their rehearsal studio with no engineer or complicated equipment (Tortoise's John McEntire assisted in mixing). They didn't rehearse either - just turned on the recorder and let things coalesce. Songs came together over long stretches, sometimes as much as a year going by between parts. You'd never guess this since the layers are joined with a liquid brush. You will be powerless to resist "Shades of Blue," will involuntarily hear "She May, She Might" on your internal jukebox first thing in the morning and "Let's Do It Wrong" late at night, or plain getting lost in the lush soundscape of "Shortwave." You need this.



NAKED GIANTS
SLUFF
NEW WEST

Sluff is the debut release from the Seattle's **Naked Giants**. Some songs are long, some are short, and some are even shorter than that. There are plenty of hooks and guitar solos. But the most important thing is that everything hits you all at once. "The album gets its personality in large part from the play between the planned and unplanned, Bassist Gianni Aiello explains. "With producer Steve Fisk (Nirvana, Low, Damien Jurado), we could carefully craft some particular sonic signatures just as easily as stumble upon some random noise or mic technique. There's no underlying concept for the album, but it's this sort of order and chaos attitude which gives it a cohesive feeling."



WYE OAK
THE LOUDER I CALL, THE FASTER IT RUNS
MERGE

For **The Louder I Call, The Faster It Runs**, **Wye Oak's** Jenn Wasner and Andy Stack flew to one another's cities - she in Durham, NC, he in Marfa, TX - for a week or so at a time, hunkering in home studios to sort through and combine their separate song sketches. These shorter stints together produced less second-guessing and hesitation in their process, yielding an unabashed and unapologetic **Wye Oak**. They discarded past rules about how to write a record, instead funneling all those experiences and experiments into perfectly unified statements - each diligently addressing a new conflict and pinning it against a wall of sound. The result is the biggest, broadest, loudest, and boldest music **Wye Oak** has ever made.



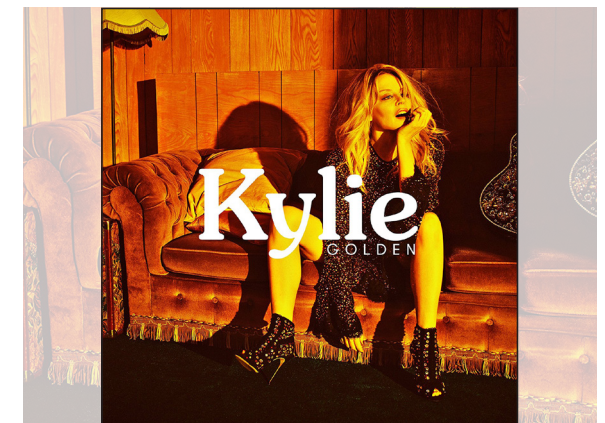
GOAT GIRL
GOAT GIRL
ROUGH TRADE

Across 19 tracks in just 40 minutes, **Goat Girl's** self-titled debut creates a half-fantasy world out of a very dirty, ugly city reality. In the group's words: "Simply put, it's an album that comes from growing up in London and the first-hand experience of our city's devolution, says the group's singer, Lottie. "It wasn't exactly intentional to have this warped country sound, but I think that was initially what we were all drawn to and inspired by, bands that existed in a lo-fi, dissonant, scratchy context." It's a very English album - full of sharp-eyed observations like The Kinks, the louche rage of The Slits, and loads of swampy guitars and electronics... Think the Geraldine Fibbers meets Elastica (or The Raincoats). You need this.



HOP ALONG
BARK YOUR HEAD OFF, DOG
SADDLE CREEK

Bark Your Head Off, Dog is, without question, **Hop Along's** most dynamic and textured record yet. Self-produced and recorded at The Headroom in Philadelphia, **Hop Along's** third effort features the familiar sounds that have always made the band allergic to genre: grunge, folk, punk, and power pop all appear, with inspiration from ELO to Elvis Costello to '70s girl group vocal arrangements. This time around, they've added strings, more intricate rhythms, lush harmonies, along with a tryst with a vocoder. And don't sleep on those lyrics! **Bark Your Head Off, Dog** shows the band at its strongest and most cohesive. **Hop Along** has never sounded so deliberate, so balanced, so delicious - like Joanna Newsom partying with That Dog.



KYLIE MINOGUE
GOLDEN
BMG

Golden, **Kylie Minogue's** first studio album in four years, was mainly recorded in Nashville. The location couldn't help but inform the sound - albeit in **Kylie's** superlative pop style. The album opens with lead single "Dancing," which sets the tone for what is to come on the album: "You've got the lyrical edge, that country feel, mixed with some sampling of the voice and electronic elements, so it does what it says on the label," says **Minogue**. "Stop Me from Falling" ups the pop but not without abandoning the futuristic hoedown vibes. But **Golden** is ultimately an international affair: Two of the songwriters that worked with Minogue are Brits living in Nashville while African-German producer **Sky Adams** helmed the production.