

MUMFORD & SONS WILDER MIND

GLASSNOTE

Angered at the establishment, **Mumford & Sons**, British by birth but, like our fearless immigrant forefathers, are given to a rebellious streak that bleeds America. Yet rather than dress up in silly hats with teabags hanging about they took on an turn of the century look that was less Jules Verne and more George Orwell gone "Down and Out" – stealthily employing the visage of well-manicured blue collar types (i.e. a mining operation's middle-management, or stable boys running from their aristocratic roots) who were eager to learn about our rough-and-tumble folk traditions in order to slightly subvert them into pounding, four-on-the-floor populist anthems so powerful that they could shellac listeners with the mere suggestion of a wordless chorus. Familiar yet foreign, this family band – all passion and pomade – conquered and charmed us all (well, Atlanta's Clermont Lounge took some umbrage with our heroes). So impressed, TBone Burnett imparted the gnostic gospels of America's True Bard, Bob Dylan, to the band – a tacit approval! With *Wilder Mind*, **Mumford & Sons** have fought their Newpoc and won! They have gone electric – wrapping their *sturm und drang* in leather jackets and Springsteenian Tones! Grit your teeth and cry "FREEDOM!"



ALABAMA SHAKES SOUND & COLOR

ATO RECORDS

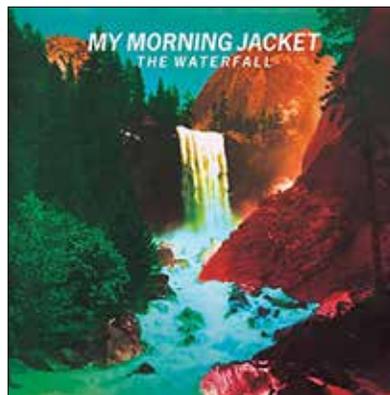
"We took our time to write this record, and I'm really glad we did," says Brittany Howard, lead singer and guitarist of **Alabama Shakes**, about the band's new album *Sound & Color*. "We were able to... explore all the things we wanted to on our first album... It's even harder now when people ask, 'What kind of band are you?' I have no clue." Rather than rest in "Southern Drag" purgatory, **The Alabama Shakes** find the perfect balance of RnB dynamism and "weird guitar band" only to burn it down and rise again as a powerful apparition that will haunt the pure analogue signal path that runs from your ears to your ass. Just check out the bluesy groove of "Shoegaze" or the garage-rock freak-out on "The Greatest" and the psychedelic space jam "Gemini." Or the gently swaying, chiming title song opens the album with what Howard calls "more of a visual thing" then explodes into the urgent, tightly-coiled funk of "Don't Wanna Fight." Long instrumental intros and passages create hazy atmosphere, and then the intensity of Howard's vocals snaps everything back into riveting focus. This isn't dress up. This isn't nostalgia. This is State of the Art Southern Soul that ain't coming down for nobody. Not even you. You need this.



ZAC BROWN BAND JEKYLL + HYDE

REPUBLIC

Zac Brown is a natural musician. He's also a good businessman, parlaying his passions for cooking and music into successful enterprises, including a rad recording studio that hosted the Foo Fighters when they came through Nashville on their *Sonic Highways* adventure. But though his music and business ventures both come from a genuine place, it requires using two different parts of your brain. Maybe that has a little something to do with why the **Zac Brown Bands'** latest album is called *Jekyll + Hyde* rather than *Jackyl & Hyde* – **Brown's** too busy to split personalities – he's gotta use the best of both. **Zac** will say that the album features "things that people will expect and things that they won't." Intriguing. It's off to a good start, though: "Homegrown" – the band's highest chart debut (#10) – has earned massive fan support and early praise for both its rock edge and its intricately arranged vocal harmonies. *Jekyll + Hyde* also features "Dress Blues" – a beautiful track from Jason Isbell's solo debut – a somber and stirring tribute to members of the military who have been killed in service, as well as "Heavy Is the Head" featuring Soundgarden / Audio slave frontman, Chris Cornell. Indeed, *Jekyll + Hyde* is a monster.



MY MORNING JACKET THE WATERFALL

CAPITOL

Throughout its 16 years, **My Morning Jacket** has always had a healthy respect for living in the moment and the inherent mysteries of creativity. They gladly took the inspiration that Panoramic House – a studio perched on a hillside overlooking the ocean in Sinsinon Beach, California – was offering and crafted a sparkling new album, *The Waterfall*, that touches on aspects of the band's celebrated past while pushing forward with a giddy assurance. There are moments that reach back to early albums such as 2001's *At Dawn* and 2003's *If Still Moves*, the record that gave the band a much broader audience. But the experimentation that marked 2004's *Z*, 2008's *Evil Urges* and frontman Jim James' 2013 solo album, *Regions of Light and Sound of God* is clearly in effect. *The Waterfall* sounds like history and decades colliding, like a record made by fervent music fans in search of that tingle up the spine. Inevitable music geeks will hear echoes of vintage rock and pop as **MMJ** continues to honor its influences without aping any of them; *The Waterfall* sounds like nothing else but also warmly familiar. Or, as James says, *The Waterfall* is "the sound of the page turning and not being sure what's coming next." Also available on **VINYLI**



BLUR MAGIC WHIP

PARLOPHONE

The Magic Whip, started life in Hong Kong when **Blue** had an unexpected break in touring in May 2013. The band spent 5 days jamming together in a local studio and then continued with their tour, ultimately, their daily lives. Then, in November last year, guitarist Graham Coxon revisited the tracks and, drafting in **Blur's** long-time producer Stephen Street, began reworking the material with the band. Damon then added lyrics and *The Magic Whip* was born. **Blur's** first record as a quartet in 16 years, *The Magic Whip* feels like the logical follow up to *Blur* and *13* – it's a record that fashions both albums' *outré* bits into slinkier songs that still belie a love for Pavement, but have replaced The Kinks with Wire, not to mention a healthy dollop of *Scary Monsters* Bowie – especially on tracks like "Go Out" and "Lonesome Street." Lyrically, Damon no longer paints with wide strokes – opting instead for something sketchier. *The Magic Whip* isn't obvious and listeners will be rewarded with repeat spins. This might be is an album about street life – listen close and distant sirens mingle with the odd details of these shady characters. *The Magic Whip* sounds delicious, but it's the bitter edge that makes this **Blur** album a welcome return.



XAVIER RUDD & THE UNITED NATIONS NANNA

NETTWERK

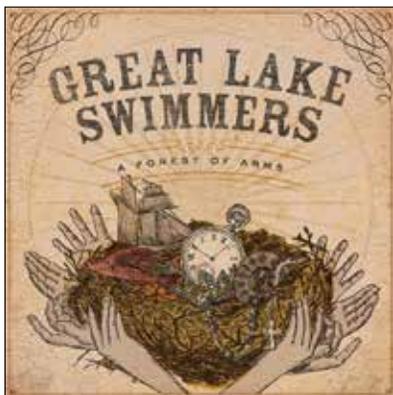
Xavier Rudd returns with *Nanna* – a career-defining album that puts the once solo artist on his feet, playing guitar center stage, as he fronts **Xavier Rudd & The United Nations**. In the past, **Rudd's** onstage one-man-band setup included a half-dozen guitar choices, three didgeridoos and various styles of native drum. With the release of *Nanna*, **Rudd** explores the next chapter in his extensive career: The frontman of a band featuring some of the best players in the world. Featuring guitar, bass, drums, percussion, keys, horns, flute and backing vocals, **Xavier Rudd & The United Nations** brings together musicians from all corners of the globe, representing the diverse cultures of Australia, Indigenous Australia, South Africa, Samoa, Germany and Papua New Guinea. Mixed by living legend Errol Brown at Tuff Gong Studios, *Nanna* earns its place in **Rudd's** impressive discography, while songs like "Flag," "Come People," and "Rusty Hammer" prove themselves to be 21st century Reggae classics.



THE WEEPIES SIRENS

NETTWERK

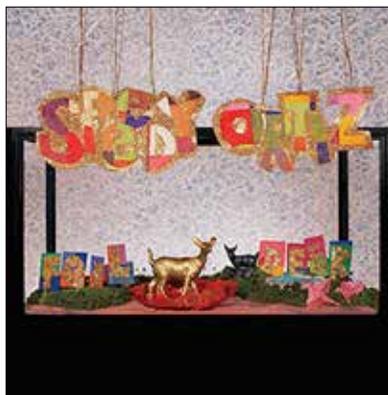
Singer-songwriters Deb Talan & Steve Tannen began writing together the night they met, and soon formed indie band **The Weepies**. On the strength of their simple yet insightful songwriting and distinctive harmonies, they've quietly sold more than a million records. They married and had three children, rarely touring but continuing to release their music, five records over seven years. Just before Christmas 2013, Talan was diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. She was in chemo by New Year's Eve. In 2014, Deb beat cancer, and **The Weepies** recorded the best album of their career. Coming back from the edge sharpened their skills and focus. At 16 songs and almost an hour long, *Sirens* shows a band at the height of its powers – a band that overcame adversity with beauty. The couple was unable to travel while Deb was in treatment, so they worked at home, inviting guest musicians to record remotely wherever each musician happened to be, resulting in an unlikely superstar backing band. Players from across the spectrum jumped in, including: Pete Thomas and Steve Nieve (Elvis Costello), Tony Levin (Peter Dinklage), Matt Chamberlain (Pearl Jam), and a horn section from New Orleans.



GREAT LAKE SWIMMERS A FOREST OF ARMS

NETTWERK

Great Lake Swimmers consists of Tony Dekker on lead vocals and guitar, long time guitarist and banjo player Erik Arnesen, Miranda Mulholland on violin and backing vocals, Bret Higgins on upright bass and newcomer Joshua Van Tassel on drums. There are also several special guest appearances on the album by Kevin Kane (Grapes of Wrath). As with past albums, **Great Lake Swimmers** recorded *A Forest Of Arms* in numerous untraditional locations over the span of several months, covering extensive new territory while remaining true to the group's refined sound. Those familiar with past **Great Lake Swimmers** albums will recognize the thematic threads of beauty in the natural world, environmental issues and explorations of close personal ties that hold us together. *A Forest Of Arms* was recorded and engineered by **Great Lake Swimmers'** long time live sound technician Justin Shane Nace and was mixed by the talented Howie Beck (Feist). The Canadian folk outfit also announced a second leg of U.S. dates that will begin in June in the Pacific Northwest. The new run will bring the band down the West coast and across the Southern states before ending on the East coast.



SPEEDY ORTIZ FOIL DEER

CARPARK

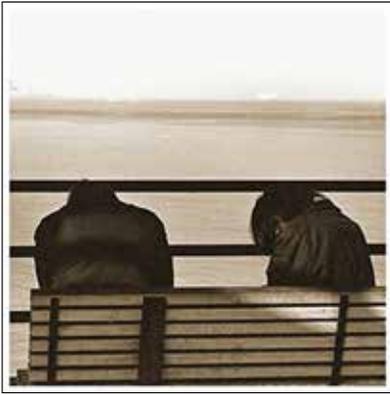
Foil Deer is the sophomore album from Massachusetts' **Speedy Ortiz**. "I'm not bossy, I'm the boss," Sadie Dupuis sings on first single "Raising the Skate," invoking in spirit one half of the Carter-Knowles clan and echoing the other's wordplay. And wordplay makes sense, considering Dupuis the band's songwriter, guitarist, and frontwoman spent the band's first few years teaching writing at UMass Amherst. She's drawn to the dense complexity of Pynchon, the dreamlike geometry of Bolaño, the confounded yearning of Plath – all attributes you could easily apply to the band's rightfully-touted 2013 debut *Major Arcana*. Dupuis wrote much of *Foil Deer* at her mother's home in the Connecticut woods, where the songwriter imposed a self-regulated exile. This music isn't coming from a dark place, and without slipping into self-empowerment jargon, it feels stronger." **Speedy Ortiz** spent almost a month in the studio on *Foil Deer*. Mike Falcone's drums are taut, mechanistic; Darl Fern's bass ranges from the aggressive rattle of an AmRep classic to smoother, hip-hop inspired lines. Devin McKnight, meanwhile, lends spacier, textural riffs to complement Dupuis' wiry, melody-driven guitar style. Think Pavement, think Liz Phair... Thank us later. You need this.



NOSAJ THING FATED

INNOVATIVE LEISURE

It's been six years since **Nosaj Thing** emerged among the vanguard of Low End Theory-affiliated producers. His debut *Drift* created 31st century tones and chromatic textures so sleek that they inspired innumerable Soundcloud imitators. None could match its moody iridescence, faded sadness and funky swing. Bach collided with Boards of Canada. Spaceships came equipped with rear view mirrors and a booming system bumping G-Funk and warped soul. *Fated* exists in this same alternate dimension, but further out. "The last record [2103's *Home*] took out so much of me. I just wanted to go back to simplifying and overthinking so much," **Nosaj** says. By stripping away all but what's really necessary, the sounds harness an unusual directness. Guest appearances are rare, save for vocals from **Whoarei** on "Don't Mind Me," and Chicago rap phenomenon, **Chance the Rapper**. The latter gravely spits on "Cold Stares," invoking terminal fevers, empty beds, devil's whispers, and insomniac fears. If comparisons crop up, *Fated* has most in common with records like Burial's *Untrue* or Dilla's *Donuts* – requiems that canvass the shadowy hinterlands between life and death, darkness and light, loneliness and love. Eternal themes re-imagined in ingenious fashion. You need this.



METZ
II
SUB POP

What happens when a seemingly irresistible force meets an immovable object is a serviceable metaphor for the music **METZ** creates, both live and on record. Now behold *II*, the convulsive new full-length from what is arguably North America's finest touring rock band. Written and recorded in 2014, after two years of constant touring behind their rightly adored self-titled debut, *II* is **METZ** at their most true to form—as pure an expression of what they do as can currently be committed to tape. The guitars are titanic, the drums ill-tempered, the vocals chilling, and the volume worrisome. From the exhilarating grind of "Spit You Out" to the blunt-force thrills of "Landfill," herein reside 10 songs that are uncompromising in their ferocity and abrasiveness with lyrics steeped in doubt, loss, death, technology, money, modern bullshit, and realizing what a lucky sunofabitch you are to even be anything at all. It also has a hard on for the Sub Pop sound of, say, 1988, mixed with an ass pocket of Jesus Lizard. You wanna rock? Here you go. Let's get guttural.



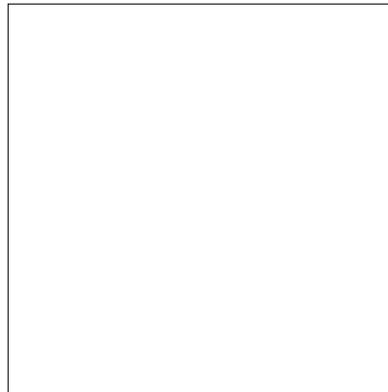
PALMA VIOLETS
DANGER IN THE CLUB
ROUGH TRADE

The follow-up to *180* – **Palma Violets'** beloved 2013 debut – *Danger In The Club* was produced by John Leckie (Stone Roses, Radiohead, The Fall) and recorded at The Doghouse Studios in Wales. While it certainly trades on the primal and joyous hook-laden rock of their debut, *Danger In The Club* finds the band with a new sonic looseness, revealing far more expansive influences than the still-quite-young quartet had on their debut. This is the sound of a preternaturally talented group of musicians and songwriters continuing to develop, while keeping their focus squarely on the type of well-crafted, singalong anthems that have earned them the adoration of fans and critics. "We wanted to make a young-sounding record," says bassist and singer Chilli Jesson "We listened to a lot of pre-punk while we were making the album. We like its rawness and simplicity. A lot of bands want to over-complicate their second album, we know that we didn't." The result is full of reeling, careening fun – sort of like Blur ditching the social commentary and playing a pub.



IVAN & ALYOSHA
IT'S ALL JUST PRETEND
DUALTONE

All the Times We Had, **Ivan & Alyosha's** first full-length album, encapsulates the personalized blend of rousing songcraft, infectious melodic hooks and thoughtful lyrical introspection that's already endeared the band to just about anyone who's witnessed one of their effortlessly uplifting live shows, or who's heard either of their EPs. The Seattle quartet — which borrows its name from a pair of characters from Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* — delivers its songs of struggle, perseverance and spirituality with a resilient, upbeat attitude that's reflected in their bubbly brew of stirring strummed folk-rock guitars, surging instrumental interaction and a bright, buoyant blend of voices that reflects the band members' family-style camaraderie, evoking a timeless pop ideal that's as affecting emotionally as it is pleasing to the ear. The 11-song album effortlessly captures the warmth and immediacy of **Ivan & Alyosha's** live performances, lending added resonance to such lyrically compelling, melodically arresting tunes as "Be Your Man," "Running for Cover," "Don't Wanna Die Anymore," "The Fold" and the album's bittersweetly reflective title track, which features guest vocals by the band's frequent touring partner and longstanding admirer Aimee Mann.



DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE
KINTSUGI
ATLANTIC

Death Cab for Cutie knew immediately that *Kintsugi* would fit perfectly as the title of their eighth studio album. A philosophy derived from the Japanese art of repairing cracked ceramics with gold to highlight flaws instead of hiding them, kintsugi speaks to the way an object's history is part of its aesthetic value. "Considering what we were going through internally, and with what a lot of the lyrics are about, it had a great deal of resonance for us," says bassist Nick Harmer, who suggested the name to singer-guitarist Ben Gibbard and drummer Jason McGerr. *Kintsugi* is the band's first time recording with a producer other than their own Chris Walla, the guitarist and multi-instrumentalist whose talents behind the board had helped shape **Death Cab's** sound. For *Kintsugi*, they worked with Rich Costey (Franz Ferdinand, Muse and Interpol), recording at his Los Angeles studio. "He accomplished what we've always attempted, which is to make **Death Cab** sound on a record how we sound live," says Gibbard "The difficulty now for the live show is making them rock as hard as they rock on the record." Indeed, the sonics hit as hard as the subject matter – which makes *Kintsugi* a both a welcome surprise and an exciting new chapter in the life of this veteran band.

