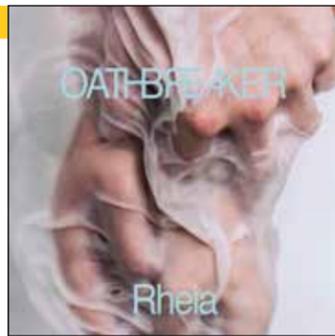




**BALANCE AND COMPOSURE**  
**LIGHT WE MADE**

BMG

According to **Balance and Composure**, they can be loud, quiet and everything in between. A pretty apt description in a nutshell. Once you get down to an intricate school of thought, the lyricism of singer Jon Simmons shows things in a different light. **Light We Made**, which was produced by Will Yip (Nothing, Pity Sex), marks a milestone for the Doylestown, PA band, who've toned down their hardcore and punk rock roots to present a body of work that is dominated by soothing, harmonic tracks. **Light We Made's** coherent mood of transcendent moments are driven by the band experimenting with new sonic elements - weaving in dreamy synth chords, melodic guitar riffs, and atmospheric bass grooves and drum beats to hit home the delivery of the songs' emotional lyrics. "This album is the culmination of the last 3 years, and how musically the band wanted to be more creative than ever before, says Simmons.



**OATHBREAKER**  
**RHEIA**

DEATHWISH

**Rheia** is the groundbreaking album from Belgium's **Oathbreaker**. Engineered, mixed, and mastered by Jack Shirley (Deafheaven, Loma Prieta), **Rheia** dissolves the boundaries of heavy music as we know it today. Opener "10:56" begins with a haunting guitar riff and Caro Tanghe's beautifully sung vocal before abruptly soaring to new heights with "Second Son of R," its blasts of melody mutate into a blackened buzz while waves of tempo changes pound down with intense emotional weight. "Being Able To Feel Nothing" then rolls in like a storm. "Stay Here / Accroche-Moi" is an otherworldly reverb drenched acoustic number that leads to "Needles In Your Skin" - a deeply personal song that showcases the artistic strength vulnerability brings. This leads to the ambitious "I'm Sorry, This Is," "Where I Live," and "Where I Leave" - a musical triptych that, like all of **Rheia**, must be heard to be believed.



**IAN SWEET**  
**SHAPESHIFTER**

HARDLY ART

"I have a way of loving too many things to take on just one shape," Jilian Medford sings over and over again on the title track of the Brooklyn-based band **Ian Sweet's** debut album, **Shapeshifter**, repeating it like a mantra. This is Medford's thesis statement, a narrator to carry us through **Shapeshifter**, which is above all else a meditation on loneliness and displacement. With Medford accompanied by drummer Tim Cheney and bassist Damien Scalise's playful instrumentation, **Shapeshifter** becomes a celebratory purging, an album that finds humor in self-deprecation and vice. **Ian Sweet's** debut interrogates capital-e Existence through a candy-coated lens, their mathy precision scaffolding the chaos of Medford's personal neurosis (and intriguingly elastic voice - think Kathleen Hanna and Dee Dee of the Dum Dum Girls on a cough syrup bender) and turning those anxieties into something hook-laden and relatable, but with some of the best guitar sounds you'll hear all year. Dig.



**NICK WATERHOUSE**  
**NEVER TWICE**

INNOVATIVE LEISURE

While lesser artists get lost in trappings of fame, **Nick Waterhouse's** acclaim only seems to energize him and make him work harder and push his music to the next level. **Never Twice** is a culmination, intensification, and realization of everything he's been developing throughout this prolific frenzy. Catchier and loaded with more hits than its predecessors, **Nick's** new LP is at the same time harder hitting, more rhythmic, more harmonic, more diverse, and more adventurous than any of the excellent work that already separated him from the pack. A cool and elegant post-post-modern cocktail of 1950s r&b and club jazz, mixed with 1960s soul and boogaloo, and shaken with a minimal contemporary sensibility, **Never Twice** finds the artist taking his time, refining his vision, and speaking with new authority. In five short years **Nick Waterhouse** has come a long way and it looks like he may have just painted his masterpiece.



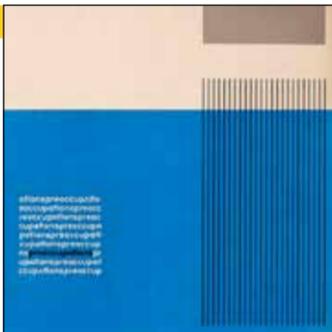
**BON IVER**  
**22, A MILLION**

JAGJAGUWAR

22 stands for Justin Vernon - the heart and soul of **Bon Iver**. The number's recurrence in his life has become a meaningful pattern through encounter and recognition. A Million is the rest of that world: the millions of people who we will never know. This other side of Justin's duality is the thing that completes him and what he searches for. **22, A Million** is thus part love letter, part final resting place of two decades of searching for self-understanding like a religion. The ten songs of **22, A Million** are a collection of sacred moments. If **Bon Iver**, **Bon Iver** built a habitat rooted in physical spaces, then **22, A Million** is the letting go of that attachment to a place. Built upon his trademark vocals, big beats, and strange samples, **22, A Million** sounds both huge and extremely fragile - as if it might fall apart at any minute. Because it could.



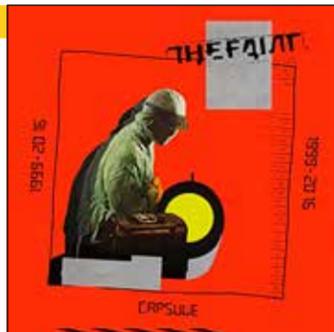
indie **FRESH**  
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**PREOCCUPATIONS**  
**PREOCCUPATIONS**

JAGJAGUWAR

When **Preoccupations** (formerly **Viet Cong**) wrote and recorded their new record, they were in a state of near total instability. Years-long relationships ended; they left homes behind. They resolved to change their band name, but hadn't settled on a new one. They walked into the studio with the gas gauge near empty, buoyed by one another while the rest of their lives were virtually unrecognizable and rootless. There was no central theme or idea to guide the band's collective cliff jump. Taking a cue from their goth and post-punk heroes, it was time to rip it up and start again. As a result, **Preoccupations** bears the visceral, personal sound of holding onto some steadiness in the midst of changing everything. Sonically, it's still blistering... Not to mention icy, sexy, raw, danceable, dramatic, and enveloping. **Preoccupations** is a singular, bracing collection that proves what's punishing can also be soothing, everything can change without disrupting your compass.



**THE FAINT**  
**CAPSULE: 1999-2016**

SADDLE CREEK

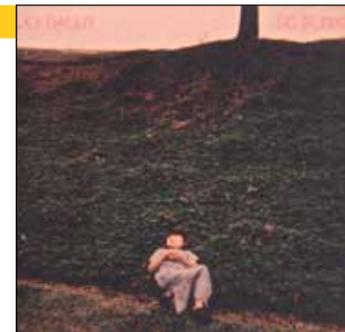
**CAPSULE: 1999-2016** is a retrospective collection that represents a golden era for **The Faint**. **The Faint** had been kicking around for four years, but had a hard time hitting their stride. "We didn't make anything we really liked until 1999," frontman Todd Fink laughs. It was in writing "Worked Up So Sexual," the hit single from 1999's **Blank-Wave Arcade**, that the band struck their jackpot moment. They discovered an entirely original fusion of synth sounds over a blaring rock background, one that was as catchy as it was danceable. Just like that, **the Faint** captured lightning in a bottle. In addition to highlighting songs from five of **The Faint's** most popular albums, **CAPSULE: 1999-2016** features three new songs: The recently released single, "Young & Realistic," and two bonus unreleased songs - "Skylab1979" and "ESP" - that give a glimpse of what's to come for **The Faint**, as they embark on a new chapter in their long, influential career.



**SAM EVIAN**  
**PREMIUM**

SADDLE CREEK

**Premium** is the glistening debut album from New York-based **Sam Evian**. **Sam** describes the album as "an analogue dream in a digital world." Like flowing water, its cool surface entices and refreshes - then reveals hidden emotional depths. The sound of **Premium** recalls a sunbaked cassette of **Pet Sounds** or **All Things Must Pass**, composed with glowing guitar chords, aching pedal steel, Wurlitzers and iconic 20th-century synths. Inspired by the soulful classic sounds of Jackson Browne, Shuggie Otis, Sly and the Family Stone and The Band, as well as contemporary influences such as Cass McCombs, Broadcast, Cate Le Bon, and Chris Cohen, this is music meant for a close-up experience - spacious, dreamy, fun, and disarmingly open and honest. **Premium** is filled with contrasts. With emotional depth and an intriguing combination of sounds, this is classic music for a modern mood.



**LUCY DACUS**  
**NO BURDEN**

MATADOR

Richmond, VA-based songwriter **Lucy Dacus** is a 21-year-old with critically-acclaimed debut album, **No Burden**, that was recently the subject of lots of attention, including a well-publicized bidding war. **Lucy Dacus's No Burden** is full of surprises - sharp lyrical observations, playful turns of musical phrase, hooks that'll embed themselves in your frontal lobe for days. But the most surprising thing about this album might be the fact that it's a debut - it has a keen sense of self about it, and it nearly glows from the self-possession held by the woman at its core. **No Burden** is a forthright, disarmingly catchy statement. And while it's a sterling debut, it only hints at the potential possessed by this passionate, thoughtful young woman. The songs, led by a powerful rhythms and tricky guitar playing conjure compelling atmospheres, blunt, powerful rock, and modes in between. It's a stellar debut - and you need it.



# indie FRESH

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### THE DEVIL MAKES THREE REDEMPTION & RUIN

NEW WEST

*Redemption & Ruin* – the new album from Santa Cruz, CA roots rockers **The Devil Makes Three** – is a 12-song cover-record with two distinct, but intertwined personalities. The first side of the record focuses on the faults and vices that can drive the creative forces within music while the second side focuses on the absolution of life, the soul and forgiveness. Within *Redemption & Ruin*, **The Devil Makes Three** exhibit their wide range of influences including nods to the Blues (Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters), Gospel (Down in The Valley), Country (Townes Van Zandt, Hank Williams Sr.), Bluegrass (Ralph Stanley), and the obscure (Tom Waits). The energy of **The Devil Makes Three's** live show is translated in all of their recordings and *Redemption & Ruin* pays homage to where that energy was created and shaped.



### FLOCK OF DIMES IF YOU SEE MEE, SAY YES

PARTISAN

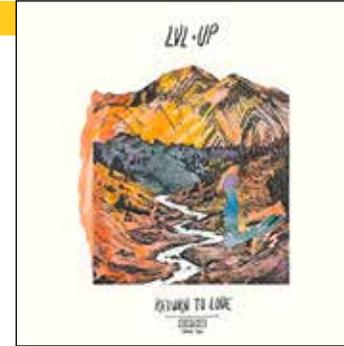
Jenn Wasner left Baltimore – where she grew up, where her family is, where she started **Wye Oak**. Now she lives in a brand new place: a quiet house in the woods in North Carolina. And so, when you listen to her debut record as **Flock of Dimes**, *If You See Me, Say Yes*, think about how when she says yes to one thing, she's saying no to another: From "Birthplace" to no place at all; from the cosmic dance-dream of "Minor Justice" to the soaring reassurance of "Everything Is Happening Today;" or "Semaphore" – a signal sent from a distance, an attempt to bridge the infinite space between two people (or two cities). **Flock of Dimes** started out as an outlet for Wasner's more experimental/electronic side and *If You See Me, Say Yes* is the culmination of three years of rapid growth & exploration. It's also her most personal, considered & introspective work yet.



### BEACH SLANG A LOUD BASH OF TEENAGE FEELINGS

POLYVINYL

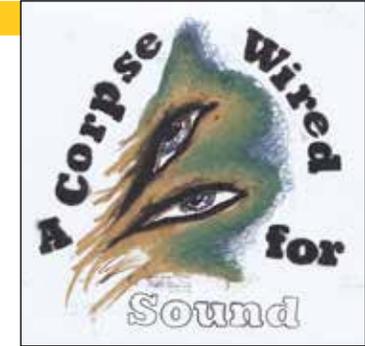
There's a feeling of youth and vulnerability at the core of **Beach Slang's** music, which is part punk, part pop and all catharsis. It references the ghosts of The Replacements but keeps one foot firmly rooted in the present. It's fun and it's serious. It's sad but it isn't. It's **Beach Slang**. Less than a year after their debut full-length landed on year-end lists from the likes of AV Club, Paste, SPIN, and Noisy, and earned praise from sources as diverse as Pitchfork to People magazine, **Beach Slang** return with their sophomore album *A Loud Bash of Teenage Feelings*. Written and recorded in the midst of a relentless touring schedule that found the band selling out sweat drenched shows across the U.S. and Europe, *A Loud Bash of Teenage Feelings* is exactly what its title implies – a raucous collection of shout-along punk rock anthems anchored by frontman James Alex's trademark heart-on-sleeve lyricism.



### LVL UP RETURN TO LOVE

SUB POP

"Hidden Driver," the opening track of **LVL UP's** third album, *Return to Love*, never stops moving. What starts with unassuming guitars and vocals adds new lines, depths, and intensity, until its unrestrained, triumphant finish. "God is peeking, softly speaking," repeats the chorus, working through the relationship between spirituality and creative inspiration, and introducing a band that is always pushing further. It also sounds a lot like a 80's version of Neutral Milk Hotel, but with a lot more feedback (this is a good thing). **LVL UP** is a true collaboration, a band that takes the stylistically distinct ideas of four members and brings them together into something new. *Return to Love* is marked by reverb, harmony and tape distortion, with a keen balance of pop and experimentation. From the fast yet flowing lines of "Blur" to the all-consuming wall of guitar in "The Closing Door," each song pushes and pulls in compelling, unexpected ways.



### MERCHANDISE A CORPSE WIRED FOR SOUND

4AD

*A Corpse Wired For Sound* signals a new chapter for **Merchandise**. Following 2014's *After The End* – a full-band effort recorded in a closet – the band stripped back to its core of Carson Cox (vocals, electronics), Dave Vassalotti (guitar, electronics) and Pat Brady (bass). The trio travelled to Rosà, Italy for their first ever sessions in a recording studio, with local producer, ICIO. The nine-song nocturnal *A Corpse Wired For Sound* was recorded half in the studio and half at home, in Tampa as well as Cox's newly adopted bases of New York and Berlin – the culmination of a long-distance collaboration between Cox and Vassalotti. The album's metallic title is inspired by a science fiction short story by JG Ballard, but equally sums up the band's current state of mind. "We were 'reborn' as a rock band for *After The End*," says Vassalotti, "and then we straight-up died again." **Merchandise** is dead. Long live **Merchandise**.