

reviews

► music, movies, dvds, games and broken glass. lots of broken glass.



THE DECEMBERISTS

THE CRANE WIFE
(CAPITAL RECORDS)

The Decemberists have, and will continue to be, an odd-ball band. If it's not Colin Meloy's unique voice, nerdy look, or his penchant for writing songs about sabers and bayonets that warrant the tag, then I'm not sure what would constitute as "odd." I'm not trying to offend anyone, but let's just be honest for a second;

not too many people in the pop world are writing songs that take theatrical influences from a time when people used swords to defend themselves. Meloy's talented at delivering the poppy gems when he needs to be, especially when he could use that Creative Writing degree he's earned to drown his listeners in pompous English verse. Although some of his metaphors and descriptions can get a little odd, it still works. This originality that Meloy brings with his lyrics and melody, combined with his talented band of musicians, makes The Decemberists one of the most welcomed bands making music today.

I must admit I was skeptical when I heard that the Canadian five-piece pop outfit was releasing a record with Capital Records. Usually, when major labels pick up indie bands, that band's musical output starts to suck. Hard. So, it was surprising to hear this record bounce with the jubilant life that The Decemberists had perfected on past records (like *Castaways and Cutouts*, *Her Majesty*, and *Picturesque*).

On *The Crane Wife*, the Decemberists's production is polished, but their infrastructure remains intact. There aren't any odd singles that jump out at you and scream, "I'm the hit!" The record, instead, sounds precise and consistent

with the majority of the band's past musical endeavors.

However, for every pop gem like *Yankee Bayonet* (*I Will Be Home Then*) and *O Valencia!* there are certain songs that could be passed over while playing this for your friends. When *The War Came* is a bit of a departure for the boys and girl in *The Decemberists*, and by employing the help of a sharp distorted guitar rhythm that could double as a Foo Fighters riff to carry the song, in the end it just sounds monotonous. Then there's the four-part rock opus *The Island/Come and See/The Landlord's Daughter/You'll Not Feel The Drowning*. In order to fully digest what the artist was trying accomplish by linking four song parts together into a 12 minute song, you need to sit down and concentrate on listening to what's going on. But for the most part, songs that run over five minutes tend to get monotonous, too. (Unless it's *Paranoid Android*. Somehow, Radiohead made it work.)

In the end, the record sounds like The Decemberists. I was scared that they'd come out with a pop-punk record and start wearing eye-make-up, but the overall consensus is that *The Crane Wife* contains some stellar material spliced between some less-than-stellar filler. **(NR)**

★★★★★

CD REVIEWS



EVANESCENCE
THE OPEN DOOR
(WIND-UP RECORDS)

Poor Evanescence; their front woman dated that dude from Seether. I could tell from the silly press photos that the guy was a giant bag of louse. Plus, Seether wasn't much of a band as it was a crappy post-grunge skid mark. And there should be a rule against treating poor Amy Lee like crap the man's handbook.

Well, payback's a bitch. Lee and crew have released a brand new record titled *The Open Door*. Much of the written material stems from Lee's relationship with Seether frontman Shaun Morgan, which crumbled, and co-founding member Ben Moody's departure in 2003. The band offers more of the same chunk metal behind Lee's icy vocals, but the result isn't as catchy as their debut.

★★★★★

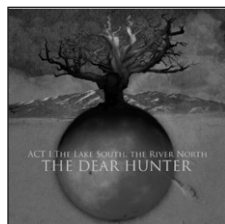


PRIMUS THEY CAN'T ALL BE ZINGERS
(INTERSCOPE RECORDS)

Primus has always been the kind of band that warrants certain types of fans and has a certain type of following that swears that everything Primus does is as good as gold. Yes, the band is talented because of Les Claypool (bass) and Tim Alexander (drums). On, and there's Larry Lalonde (guitars) too.

For me, Primus has always — and will continue to be — a scatterbrained version of funk rock. Their breakdowns, spoken word verses, angular rhythmic spikes, incomprehensible bass lines leave me frustrated and tired. *They Can't All Be Zingers* is a classic Primus album for all you hardcore Primus fans out there. For the rest of the world, we'll take Winona's *Big Brown Beaver* and be happy with it.

★★★★★



THE DEAR HUNTER
ACT: THE LAKE SOUTH,
THE RIVER NORTH
(TRIPLE CROWN RECORDS)

This is what you get when you take *The Mars Volta* and combine it with pop-punk; you get *The Dear Hunter*. Right off the bat, I was surprised because this band carelessly titled their debut *Triple Crown Records* release *Act 1: The Lake South, The River North*. That's like the ultimate death trap for bands — to come out with a record that's an *Act 1* before you're known. If they broke up, then the only contribution release they would have is *Act 1*. What a shame!

The Dear Hunter is the brainchild of Casey Crescenzo, ex-guitarist and vocalist for *The Receiving End Of Sirens*. The music channels *Mars Volta*-esque musical passages against bits of pop-punk and result in a stale copy of better bands.

★★★★★



THE SCISSOR SISTERS TA-DAH
(UNIVERSAL RECORDS)

These guys (and gal) love to bring the dance. On *The Scissor Sisters'* self-titled debut, they reminded the world that dancing is important when you just want to let loose and get high. (It's true!) The band has a knack for writing good, poppy songs and expressing the overall vibe of their existence.

Regardless of where you stand with *The Scissor Sisters*, some people are turned off by their sexual practices, glitter and disco ball records while others remain rather turned-on. On *Tah-Dah*, the disco collective channels Elton John into a branded dance sound and morph their rhythms into a world of electronic-meets-organic-drums-and-synth sound. The result is a straight and fun dance record.

★★★★★



KEVIN DEVINE PUT YOUR GHOST TO REST
(CAPITAL RECORDINGS)

Kevin Devine has been writing and recording since he was a wee lad. He started when he was eight, and released three records prior to his Capital Records debut — *Split The Country*, *Split The Street*, *Make The Clocks Move* and *Circle Gets The Square* are the albums this Brooklyn native has released to much critical acclaim.

His newest record, *Put Your Ghost To Rest*, is a largely acoustic record that highlights Devine's strongest abilities — his ability to sing and his ability to play guitar. Unfortunately, Devine's sound is a lot like *Death Cab For Cutie's*. In fact, Devine's crooning sounds too close for comfort to *Death Cab's* front man Ben Gibbard. If you dig DCF, then give this a listen.

★★★★★



I AM GHOST LOVERS' REQUIEM
(EPIGRAPH RECORDS)

Goth-punk; that's what they're calling this now. It's a new sub-genre of punk rock kids who are too depressed to put glue in their hair in order to make their mohawks stiff. Goth-punk is for those kids who grew up confused listening to *The Cure* and *The Gears*. The artists' search for creating something new and exciting has warranted another dividing card on the racks at FYE.

I Am Ghost mix some darker atmospherics into their brand of punk rock, if you can call it that. (It's more like metal than anything I'd call punk.) Their sound bounces between the new pop-punk and straightforward goth-electronica. Although the band has got some good ideas, they sound like they've got an identity crisis on their collective hands.

★★★★★



KYLE JUSTIN LIVE AT THE TIN ANGEL
(UNSIGNED)

Kyle Justin is a self-made artist who blends jazz and pop (and an acoustic guitar) into a smooth sound that highlights his exquisite voice. Justin graduated from the University Of The Arts in Philly where he studied the art of jazz guitar and musical composition. This knowledge is prevalent on his solo outing, *Live At The Tin Angel* because of his unique chord inversion style and rhythmic voicings.

His lyrical content zig zags between songs about women and politics — *What A Woman Should Be* is a self-explanatory song about the complexities of women and *So It Goes* is a naive look at politics, which is enlightening in its honesty. Justin is a man with his own beliefs and he sings with passion and emotion. Good stuff.

★★★★★