

UNDER THE RADAR

The Solution To Music Pollution



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Also included is an exclusive CD of five unreleased live recordings from small shows in Los Angeles in 1997. (www.autumndewilde.com) ***** 8/10

By Gary Knight



Ed Hamilton: Legends of the Chelsea Hotel: Living With the Artists and Outlaws of New York's Rebel Mecca (Da Capo)

Freelancer Ed Hamilton has based this memoir on his dozen-year residence at New York's venerable institution for artists, junkies, whores, and psychos, a place where the line between simple idiosyncrasy and outright madness gets blurred from day to day.

How to convey the insanity of the place while remaining sufficiently lucid to actually do so? Hamilton's certainly adopted enough quirks (dumpster diving for found-art objects, fishing off a stairwell) to mark him a card-carrying crazy, but he's fueled more by inspiration, not desperation—exercising creative muscle, not exercising demons.

As expected, the usual rogues' gallery of celebrities gets trotted out, from Sarah Bernhardt to Sid and Nancy. Still, since Hamilton's aim isn't mere name-dropping, the obscure share equal time with the famous, and provide some of the more memorable passages herein.

The Chelsea is often seen as the place people go to escape convention and formality, but in Hamilton's hands, it's become something else—a kind of community and, yes, family—in the heart of the big, bad city. (www.dacapopress.com) ***** 7/10

Paul Hegarty: Noise/Music: A History (Continuum)

Noise/Music is a study on the history of noise as music, a relatively new phenomenon in the history of music. This thought-provoking book is based on Paul Hegarty's philosophical argument that perception of noise is an individual observation of sound, that discernment of noise versus music is a thin line based on personal judgment, and that noise can be

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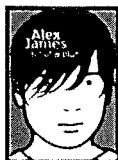
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pnries spends much of his time gh past interviews and casting a historical backdrop where- r looks perennially out of step, ra. Still, Humphries does man- ther a coherent and compelling vits from his adolescence spent Beat poets and jazz musicians ablishment as a "new Dylan"

and his many subsequent creative reinven- tions. Numerous compelling questions arise. Is Waits a genuinely innovative artist or just a master at creating an amalgam of his influ- ences? Was his crumpled old man persona a reflection of his longing for a father figure? Why has he become increasingly reclusive and guarded? Those questions ultimately remain unanswered, but no better tome exists for a near-exhaustive account of Waits' many lives. (www.tomwaits.com) ***** 8/10

By Matt Fink



Alex James: Bit Of A Blur: The Autobiography (Little Brown)

Alex James, bass player for Blur, has reached a turning point in his existence to pen his autobiography, *Bit Of A Blur*. Written wholly by James, the voice is natural and fluid, representing its speaker's sweet, and still innocent, nature. He draws tangible, visceral pictures that make you feel like you are right there, smelling and touching everything he does.

In his colloquial speech, James' explana- tions are brief enough to keep you interested yet long enough to give you enough informa- tion. He ably captures the invincibility of a youth full of dreams. There is no cheapening of the rock 'n' roll myth with gratuitous sexual tales and gossipy exposés—so much so that the Blur versus Oasis debacle and the pivotal exit of guitarist Graham Coxon are mentioned only in passing, in less than a paragraph for each.

James is utterly honest in *Blur*. He is intoxicated for most of the book, but in a PG-13 kind of way. His tone is irreverent, making for a very humorous read. He tends not to place the blame for anything on anyone but himself. Ultimately, he comes to self-discovery through overindulgence without a hint of moral reproach towards the reader. (www.littlebrown.co.uk) ***** 9/10

By Lily Moayeri



Amanda Petrusich: 33 1/3 Presents: Pink Moon (Continuum)

A 26-year-old Canadian ad copywriter born the year of Nick Drake's passing makes for a most unlikely hero in the story of the long-lamented British singer/songwriter, but that's exactly

what Shane Hutton becomes in Petrusich's hands.

You see, it was Hutton who, back in 2000, co-created the famous Volkswagen Cabrio convertible spot and chose as its soundtrack "Pink Moon," thus permitting Drake a posthumous measure of the success that had eluded him during his lifetime—a major cause, Petrusich would argue, for his suicide.

While the book is oftentimes frustrating, with scant details about the actual making of the album, and lots of ink spilled on testimonials from others (Robyn Hitchcock, M. Ward) the focus on song and its relation to advertising is a novel one and worthy of further study. (www.33third.blogspot.com) ***** 8/10

Scott Plagenhoef: 33 1/3 Presents: If You're Feeling Sinister (Continuum)



What is there to say about *If You're Feeling Sinister* that hasn't already been said? An undeniable classic. Belle & Sebastian's sophomore outing is the latest to be given the book-length treatment in Continuum's 33 1/3 series. While some previous editions have taken the forms of fiction or memoir, longtime *Pitchfork* scribe Scott Plagenhoef is more direct, offering straight criticism and appreciation.

Plagenhoef knows his subject inside and out and has gone the extra mile to research and contextualize the work—a necessary task, since the band refused to be interviewed for the project. Stuart Murdoch & Co. worked hard to create a myth and a mystery to the band in its early days, and as such there's a lot of emphasis on the (often frustrating) experience of being an early B&S fan. While Plagenhoef has a tendency to fetishize on the days of pre-Internet instant gratification fandom, the book inadvertently provides a good education for readers who missed the dawn of the Web and its effect on how music is consumed.

Plagenhoef does an admirable job of giving a full picture of both band and album, though the book often reads like a pared-down version of *Just a Modern Rock Band*, the 2005 official B&S biography. Still, it's nice to see a modern classic get some due recognition. (www.33third.blogspot.com) ***** 7/10

By Aaron Passman



Alex Ross: The Rest Is Noise (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)

The subtitle of this book is "Listening to the Twentieth Century," and Ross aims at nothing less than giving an account of the twentieth cen-

tury through classical music, intertwining history and culture in the European and American centers. If that sounds like a near impossible task, it is: this book is precisely the sort of grand sweeping popular approach to explanations and accounts that drives clear thinkers nearly mad. There are frequent name drops from the realms of philosophy (Adorno, Wittgenstein), literature (Tolstoy, Joyce), art (Picasso, Gehry), and popular music (Velvet Underground, Grateful Dead) that serve only to bolster Ross' ethos as they are rarely developed into full arguments or anecdotes. If Ross truly has the depth and dexterity of mind that this book suggests, one wishes he would actually deliver it, rather than tease it. As it stands, he comes off as not an historian, philosopher, or musicologist but as a popular critic; a tourist of history.

But it is, after all, a popular book—and it is very accessible. Ross is instructive in classical music form and content without being didactic, and assumes just the right amount of familiarity from his reader with the key players (which is not much), but he doesn't make you feel that way. And just like his *New Yorker* pieces, his enthusiasm for classical music is truly infectious.

If we take the purpose of his book as not an historical/philosophical account but as another concern that arises throughout the book—to make those who listen to experi-

mental popular music, see indie films, and frequent modern art museums interested in classical music—Ross has made an excellent case for the emotional, intellectual, and dramatic world of classical music firmly belonging in contemporary popular arts discussions. (www.therestisnoise.com) ***** 8/10

By Ryan Gillespie



Kate Schatz: 33 1/3 Presents: Rid of Me: A Story (Continuum)

Some albums invade a person so deeply they are driven to obsession. Apparently this was the case for Kate Schatz, who as a teenager was consumed with PJ Harvey's *Rid of Me*—not surprising for an album so deeply drenched with sex, angst, and betrayal. Lucky for us, Schatz is now a writer and has channeled her fervor into a narrative inspired by the album about two troubled girls who are mysteriously drawn together to an ominous house in the woods. Though a bit heavy-handed, the story weaves in *Rid of Me*'s lyrics and themes of infidelity, lust, and rage, mirroring its track listing as chapter titles. For an album that rips your guts out with stripped-down rock and raw emotion, *Rid of Me: A Story* is an engaging homage. PJ Harvey fans that may have similar feelings about the album will find the book an attractive companion piece. (www.33third.blogspot.com) ***** 6/10

By Michelle Salzman



Brian Southall: Sex Pistols: 90 Days at EMI (Bobcat Books)

During *The Sex Pistols'* three years together in the late '70s, only 90 days were spent with EMI, the original record company that signed the group. This brief time has proved to be their most history-making. Brian Southall's *Sex Pistols: 90 Days at EMI* is an objective account of this period. Southall served in public relations for EMI at the time. Although Southall was forbidden to speak on behalf of the band, and by his own admittance, "didn't get it," he was still very much on the inside. Complete with an introduction by the Pistols' original bass player during their EMI stint, Glen Matlock, and fleshed out with substantiated quotes from various books, publications, and websites, *90 Days* gives the story from a record company perspective, yet keeps its impartiality. While *90 Days* doesn't bring any new information to the surface, it is a must-have for Pistols fans and music historians alike. (www.omnibuspress.com) ***** 8/10

By Lily Moayeri



Jim Walsh: The Replacements: All Over But the Shouting (Voyageur Press)

Some of us barely would have made it through high school without *The Replacements' Let It Be*, the gateway album bookended by the band's drunken, meteoric rise and slow, tragic burn. Those who got the bug likely still haven't shaken it, a perennial staple long after the angst of our younger years. The "Mats were a volatile suspension, a self-sabotaging train-wreck, belligerent smartasses who gave the mainstream and the underground a swift kick in the ass. Then they grew up. Or tried. Walsh paints a superb picture in this "oral history" chronologically assembling quotes from the band, their friends and family, critics, label reps, scenesters, fellow musicians, and more to tell myriad sides of the story. Ultimate judgment goes to the reader. Walsh effectively gives you that fly-on-the-wall perspective of each phase of *The Replacements'* shambling decade of existence. One certainty: you'll immediately reach for their albums. (www.voyageurpress.com) ***** 8/10

By J. Pace