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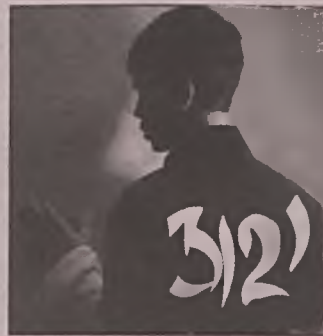


Record round-up: one prince and a few queens

Prince is enthroned atop the "Billboard" album chart with "3121" (Universal) as I write this. It's an amazing capper to the commercial comeback he initiated with 2004's "Musicology" album and ensuing mega-successful tour. The best part of this achievement is that "3121" deserves its success. The 12-track set is funky and fun, modern sounding yet underpinned by the classic Prince flourishes fans know and love. Current single "Black Sweat" has broken the ice at radio and video outlets. Synth-pop gem "Lolita," danceable "Love" and rocking "Fury" could follow all the way to the top.

In this age when any female artist who warbles on key is labeled a diva, thank goodness for singers like **Etta James** who truly deserve the title. "All The Way" (RCA Victor), Etta's latest release in a career that's already spanned five decades, is a collection of songs "that I heard and thought, 'wish I could have been the one to do that one first!'" James puts her unique stamp on 11 old and new classics ranging from Frank Sinatra's signature "All The Way" to John Lennon's "Imagine" to Prince's "Purple Rain." The album's high point is a flawlessly arranged cover of Johnny 'Guitar' Watson's "Strung Out."

"Supernature," the third album from U.K. electro-pop duo **Goldfrapp**, is — to quote the press release — "a colossal, multi-layered, sonic-pop thriller." Dynamic duo Alison Goldfrapp and Will Gregory cuisinart their influences (everything from Giorgio Moroder's robo-disco



Prince rules the charts with a lace glove.

to Marc Bolan's glam-ed rock to Kate Bush's ethereal pop) then add a cup of tomorrow to cook up a sound that's unmistakably Goldfrapp: "Great fun, quirky and a bit nasty but simple as well," says the

original Ali G.

Not to be outdone, a handful of queer artists have new releases in the bins (or on the way).

Erasure's Andy Bell ('mo) and Vince Clark (no) pull the plug on "Union Street" (Mute) — literally — eschewing their trademark synths for acoustic takes on 11 career-spanning songs. The result proves there's always been more to Erasure than shiny pop thrills.

Out Canadian **Ashley MacIsaac**

switches from Celtic revivalist fiddler to lo-fi singer-songwriter on his latest album, "Pride" (Koch). The 29-year-old, who has previously collaborated with David Byrne and the Chieftains, has more in common with Tom Waits and Nick Cave in his new incarnation. Lead single is the attitude-fueled "Bitch."

Australian quartet **GloveboX**, fronted by Hungarian/Cyprian lesbian Mishka, are well known Down Under, now they're ready to conquer the U.S. with their "electroorganic"

grooves. The band's 13-cut self-titled debut (Baria) skips through old skool synthfunk, drum and bass and downtempo with aplomb.



Kevin Cahoon and Ghetto Cowboy are gaining huge buzz in the downtown New York music scene. Small wonder, the spiky, way-gay glam rock of "Doll" (Anchor

C), the ensemble's 10-track introduction, is perfect for the hipster set. Broadway queen Cahoon (pictured), wailing like a real-life Hedwig — whom he played in N.Y., Frisco and Boston productions — even thrashes through a version of Anne Murray's "Could I Have This Dance." What's not to love?

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