

## Album Review: Neil Young's newest a slight letdown

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Over the years, Neil Young has cemented himself as one of the greatest songwriters of the last half-century or so but his best years just might be behind him.

His recent release, the sarcastically titled *Chrome Dreams II*, is a bit of a mixed bag, with some great tunes but an overall lack of interesting material. The original *Chrome Dreams* got shelved around 1975 and has never been officially released. This disc is reminiscent of that one in that it contains both soft acoustic numbers as well as Neil's brand of dirty, grungy rock n' roll.

The stronger tunes on *Chrome Dreams II* all seem to come from that latter category, such as the psychedelic "No Hidden Path" which sounds like a long journey across a smoldering Sahara desert. And the centerpiece of the album, "Ordinary People", may be one of the best songs that Mr.

Young has ever written.

"Ordinary People" is a sprawling eighteen-plus minute epic that makes clever

features a refrain that is just triumphant and glorious, sucking the listener further and further in as it slowly evolves



use of the word "people" in a multitude of different ways. The song makes great use of trumpets, saxophones, and of course Neil's incomparable lead guitar playing. The track

over the course of the song.

Other than these two songs though, there isn't much to be offered on *Chrome Dreams II*. The acoustic opener "Beautiful Bluebird" and "Boxcar" which

follows are okay, but ultimately forgettable. The other laid-back tracks like "The Believer" and "Shining Light" are pretty boring and lack anything that warrants multiple listens.

The real stinker of the album is "Dirty Old Man" which is apparently meant to be a sort of sloppily played and lyrically poor joke, but the joke doesn't translate well into a three minute song.

"The Way" is a pretty neat closer that stands out as the best of the softer tracks. Its use of a choir of children is both new for Neil and also works well into the song.

So there are only about three or four of the ten tracks which really stand out as being great Neil Young songs. It is also of note that "Ordinary People" was recorded in the late 80's but never used and represents a different time for Neil. It seems as though he can't write enough good new material to put together a strong album quite like he used to.

## Album Review: Ani DiFranco's *Canon*

by Sarah Carlson  
Contributor

I would like to preface this review with the acknowledgment that I have a very strong bias here. Anyone who knows me at all knows that my love of Ani DiFranco borders on obsession. That being said, I will try to be as objective as possible in my review of her new compilation album.

Ani's prolific career as a songwriter started with her self-titled album, released in 1990. She has produced at least one studio album every year since then. *Canon* is a compilation album which



spans her entire career. When I first listened to the album, I thought it was okay, but being a hard-core Ani fan I don't really need it, because I already have all of her albums. I was going to write a review to the

effect of "If you are an Ani newbie, this is the next album you should buy, but if you are a longtime fan, just be sure to download the amazing remixes of *Napoleon*, *Shameless*, *Both Hands* and *Overlap*." As I have listened to the album many times since then, I am going to have to change my mind. This compilation does not play like your average "greatest hits" album does. It seems that the songs have been very deliberately picked and if it is listened to from beginning to end the songs flow gracefully from one to the next.

For the most part there is a nice mixture of songs, but I must voice my complaint that

there is only one song from *To the Teeth* and *Puddle Dive*, and the albums *Not So Soft*, *Imperfectly*, *Up Up Up Up Up Up* (one of my personal favorites) are ignored completely. Now I understand that with eighteen studio albums under her belt, it must have been difficult for her to choose which songs to add to the list, but with 36 songs she could have used two songs from every album. Even with those shortcomings this is essential Ani.

In conclusion, I will stay that my objective review of this album is ten out of five stars and that everyone should BUY THIS ALBUM, RIGHT NOW!