

MUSIC SHORTS

O'DEATH



BROKEN HYMNS, LIMBS AND SKIN



FREAK FOLK

O'Death is the most unabashedly evil folk band you're likely to ever meet. And that is in no way a bad thing.

On *Broken Hymns, Limbs and Skin* frenetic bursts of fiddle, banjo and guitar thrash to and fro, providing the background for twang-filled groans and screams that relate a thoroughly hedonistic vision of the end of days.

It creates the image of a band of mountain boys who, after hearing of the impending apocalypse, high-tailed it to the middle of the woods to engage in a hallelaloo of demon worship and violent sex.

"Legs to Sin," for instance, takes the perspective of a man who prepares to make love to a recently dismembered woman. "Now without her hog-tied feet, she had everything a body could need," Greg Jamie sings before switching to a full on metal roar for the line, "Won't you lay on top?"

The amazing thing is how irresistibly entertaining this life of vicious pleasure becomes when layered over O'Death's energetic and inventive performances.

"A Light that Does Not Dim" fuses electric guitar and fiddle into full on dance rock, and "Lean-to" takes melodic inspiration from Aaron Copland's *Rodeo* to give bluegrass the power of an arena band.

While O'Death is clearly aware of all the evil that exists in the world, the band sees this as no reason to be down. Instead the band throws a rollicking hoe-down that makes all that sin seem like so much fun.

-Jordan Lawrence

BUTTERFLIES
NOTHING'S PERSONAL



FOLK/ROCK

Packaging is everything on *Nothing's Personal*, the new album by Chapel Hill's Butterflies.

All the elements of the band's music have to be just right to make the angst-filled observations of singer Josh Kimbrough come off as something other than average emo.

But luckily, Butterflies know exactly what it's doing.

Wrapped up in insistent arrangements that range from gently squealing folk-rock, powered by the razor-sharp fiddle playing of Robert Britt, to straight-ahead pop-rock, Kimbrough makes insightful comments on the transitional stage that comes at the end of one's youth.

"It makes me sad to think that our love can grow so strong/Only when we fear we'll lose it," he pines in album opener "Mind Games," conveying the feeling of being in a relationship that's not right for its time as Britt weaves fiddle lines that pierce like a needle and thread sewing up the finality of the situation.

Kimbrough writes his songs in a matter-of-fact fashion that he matches with his smooth, relaxed delivery. It makes the songs come off more as the well-reasoned arguments of a well-trained debater than the annoying complaints of a lonely 20-something.

So while some of his lines might come off as cliched, none of them are whiny, making the album consistently enjoyable.

Filled to the brim with nostalgia and the kind of common sense songwriting that appeals to all ages, *Nothing's Personal* proves that emotional music doesn't always have to be painfully dramatic.

-Jordan Lawrence

PINK FLAG AND THE
HOMEWRECKERS
INTRODUCING...



PUNK

There is something to be learned from "Fight Song," the last song of Durham band Pink Flag's contribution to a split release with fellow Bull City punks The Homewreckers.

As the song's pointed, yet playful declaration of "We are Pink Flag/Mighty, Mighty Pink Flag," comes to a close, the trio breaks into laughter.

That seems to be what this band is all about, ripping through its fast and loud, yet hooky-as-hell songs, then laughing and having a beer together. Singer Betsy Shane has said the three girls are best friends, calling it more of a "cult than a band." And that bond comes through on record, as the group uses the seven songs of its debut to display its incredibly tight brand of punk and riot grrl.

But amid the icy guitars and machine gun drums, there are incredible hooks and an undeniable pop sensibility that pokes out of the punk madness just enough to make this release an incredible addition to Durham's growing legacy.

As The Homewreckers' side of the disc gets going, not much really changes.

The energy is all there. And with guitar and drum lines crafted in a hot and sweaty garage, the band quickly announces its presence with authority in its new home of the Bull City.

Combining a hardened edge with the spunk of a lady spurned, Jill Homewrecker sings, "Don't you mess around saying we're just friends."

And with all the spunk on this record, guys will certainly want to stay in line.

-Jamie Williams

BELLE & SEBASTIAN
BBC RECORDINGS



POP

In a collection released by Matador Records, Belle & Sebastian have collected live radio recordings taken from BBC appearances between 1996 and 2001.

Although the recordings aren't recent, it's interesting to see how the band's sound has evolved over the past decade. Actually, it might be more interesting to note that their sound has evolved very little.

-Jordan Lawrence

Most of the songs still retain some of Belle & Sebastian's signature sounds: jangling guitar, a mix of male and female harmonies and Stuart Murdoch's distinct breathy vocals. The majority of the songs are moderately to gleefully upbeat, and despite some songs being more than 12 years old, the album never sounds dated.

Some songs, such as "Wrong Love," are a departure from Belle & Sebastian's distinct musical style. This song is a strange combination of Americana-influenced verses infused with instrumental support from a cello and horn section.

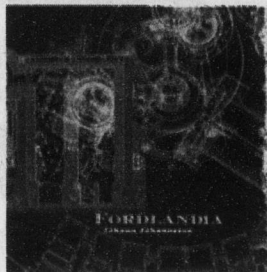
For the most part, the album does sound slightly less sophisticated than later works produced by the band. This could be due to the fact that the recordings are all live, and so the overall sound of the album is not quite as lush.

And despite the thinner sound, the album is certainly entertaining and will be appreciated by anyone who is already a fan of the band.

But, on the other hand, it isn't likely to recruit any new followers.

-Cassie Perez

JÓHANN JÓHANSSON



FORDLÁNDIA



MODERN CLASSICAL

Like Henry Ford's land purchase disaster from which the album takes its name, Jóhann Jóhannsson's *Fordlândia* is an ambitious project that, despite its toil and effort, fails to meet its own goals.

The second in a proposed trilogy that included 2006's *IBM-1401, A User's Manual*, the album focuses

on themes of industrialization, technology, the ambition of man and the human condition in the modern age.

Using Ford's Amazonian investment disaster as a backdrop for the pitfalls of overzealous greed, Jóhannsson's strings sweep across the record, accented by processed guitar and electronics.

Here Jóhannsson moves into film score territory, with each piece feeling like a companion to some image instead of its own self-sufficient composition. The album could easily be compared to the soundtrack of any Oscar-bait, big-budget feature.

His previous installment of the series used its own subject, an early model IBM computer series and its operating sounds, as an instrument within the music in conjunc-

tion with Jóhannsson's strings and electronics for a touching elegy to both technology and his father. On *Fordlândia* the subject is merely a backdrop for atmospheric symphonies and white noise.

When the deluge of crescendos and swells subside, Jóhannsson returns to what he does best: thoughtful minimalist classical music that slowly builds with a sense of technological precision.

Fordlândia is an epic record that brims with the promise of triumph combined with the despair that awaits ambition. Unfortunately these sentiments ring somewhat hollow amidst the melodramatic fanfare, relegating this work as an Oscar soundtrack that never was.

-Ben Pittard

TRUE BLUES GRIT



DTH/ZACH HOFFMAN

Melissa Swingle, front woman of Chapel Hill blues duo The Moaners, delivers the bands garage-influenced brand of blues at The Reservoir on Nov. 13. Nashville band Trampskirts also rocked the small club with a sound that's straight from the garage.

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