

# MusicReviews

## SINGLES REVIEWS

ARTIST: ONE NIGHT ONLY  
SINGLE: YOU AND ME

The ever feral and increasingly corpulent Zane Lowe has dubbed this track his 'Hottest Record in the World'. Not a bad start, considering most of the band are only just exiting puberty. Accordingly, the track retains a sense of cheery, youthful buoyancy. I guess you have to admit, albeit with reluctance, it's refreshing to see a band that isn't afraid to admit that they might be, well, happy.

ARTIST: THE PROCLAIMERS  
SINGLE: WHOLE WIDE WORLD

The Proclaimers, of "I would walk 500 miles..." fame are back, it seems - and not squandering away their pension fund on some cottage in Scotland (as I'd always assumed). Perhaps not the "stirring sing-along rock number" claimed by the press release, but this cover of the Wreckless Eric '70s track trundles along quite pleasantly and only occasionally falls prey to monotony. The boys aren't quite back in town, but at least Craig and Charlie seem to be 'on their way...'

ARTIST: TIMBALAND PRESENTS ONE REPUBLIC  
SINGLE: APOLOGIZE

Not your conventional Timbaland track - mostly because at first listen you could easily mistake it for the Backstreet Boys' comeback record. Granted, that's slightly harsh, but really, after all the saccharine melodics we've been inundated with this week, I really was hoping for something a bit more gritty - at the very least a bassline that doesn't lull you to sleep. Is that really so much to ask, Timbaland? Is it?

ARTIST: VINCENT VINCENT AND THE VILLAINS  
SINGLE: ON MY OWN

Finally something with bit of zest, something just about sparky enough to haul me out of the general musical apathy that this week's singles have thrust upon me with their unfailing mediocrity. Kicking off with a syn-copated bluesy (bordering on reggae) beat followed by some a cappella style harmonizing and then practically prancing into some good honest indie-guitar strumming - genre wise, it keeps you on your toes. Besides, the rhythm's infectious in that shoulder-shrugging kinda way - and so, it falls upon me to admit, it's quite good, actually.

ARTIST: WILLY MASON  
SINGLE: GOTTA KEEP WALKIN'

I'm not sure why it is, but record companies never tire of sending me Willy Mason records. Unfortunately, since Willy basically has one sound, they all tend to meld seamlessly into one another. Yet, whereas with most bands, monotony usually spells disaster, Willy-wise it's quite a different story. Mason may stick to a formula but it's one that he executes perfectly and this latest offering showcases his unique ability to fuse the soothing with the haunting - like the perfect cup of coffee, it doesn't taste much different with every sip, but it still goes down good.

Singles this week were reviewed by Sara Sayeed

ARTIST: THE VINCENT BLACK SHADOW

ALBUM: FEARS IN THE WATER

REVIEW: SARA SAYEED

DATE: 05/11/07



Upon listening to the first track, I was pleased to find that this band was going to pose me with some cerebral challenges; it sounded so familiar, I really had to wrack my brains to come up with a valid reference. There were the commanding female vocals, the jaunty but not chirpy rhythms that all sounded vaguely reminiscent of the Long Blondes but, you know, worse. After a few more tracks my mental anguish eased slightly as, thankfully, they were all so derivative that a plethora of comparisons just flooded in - but I'll be selective.

First up there's Evanescence, who until now I thought were unparalleled in morose, artless crooning. But then, they also sound like Placebo, if just a shade less self-indulgent and just tad more, well, awful. Yet, one must give credit where it's due and where



ARTIST: DREAM THEATER  
VENUE: MANCHESTER APOLLO  
REVIEW: PETER CAMBELL  
DATE: 06/10/07



For those of you who have not heard of Dream Theater, all you need to know is that they are essentially five virtuoso musicians, all classically trained, who collectively write some of the most complicated and original music of our time. Although they saw and influenced the transition from progressive rock to progressive metal in music, only this year have Dream Theater headlined a tent at the Download Festival. On their current world tour they are only playing a handful of dates on British soil, and have sold out Wembley Arena.

What particularity stands out in a Dream Theater show is not only the band's phenomenal precision but the synchronisation of that tightness with the breathtaking lighting and visual displays that comprise their two-and-a-half-hour set. Despite having over 20 years of music to choose from, the band predominately stuck to a selection from their new album, *Systematic Chaos*. Every one was played absolutely perfectly, and highlights included 'Take the Time' (closing with a solo duel between keyboardist Jordan Rudess and guitarist John Petrucci) and 'In the Presence of Enemies' (a 25 minute beast of a song).

The blistering virtuosity and the perfectly executed lighting display put the show at the top of any live music event I have ever been to, including last year's Reading Festival, which is not something I would say lightly.

this band excels is in offering so many delightfully interesting talking points. Visually, they remind me of those bands that used to sing on Buffy - you know the ones that did 'live' gigs, but then were skilfully worked into the episode by actually being vampires? The only place where VBS fail in this comparison is that the Vampires in Buffy were more subtly disguised, whereas these guys, with their blood-stained lips, black fishnets and generally dreary attire, probably would have been staked the minute they stepped on stage. Shame, as then you would miss their intensely sombre lyrics. Although some are a tad too subjective for a mass audience ("new life has found a place, it's laid eggs in someone's eye"), there are also those that many can relate to. For example, 'Valentine', which you can sing to your loved one: "Promise you'll stay awake tonight when I load the barrel. You owe me another night! A pony, a glass of wine."

VBS have so much to offer our world, that you can't help worrying, who is looking after these benevolent creatures? Perhaps someone should suggest psychiatric care, or a brownie? Something to lift the spirits. Bless them, but really, all this darkness can't be healthy.



ARTIST: STARS  
VENUE: BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB, LEEDS  
REVIEW: SAM THOMAS  
DATE: 02/10/07



Stars' hometown Montreal is a very long way from Leeds in every conceivable sense, and the well-worn charm of the Brudenell was a strange fit for a band who specialise in writing quirky, earnest lovesongs then swathing them in a lush sound with big, bold hooks.

Three of their number moonlight in Canadian supergroup Broken Social Scene, but it's clear from the start they're a different proposition entirely. Opener 'Take Me To The Riot' isn't the strongest song on their new album, but Torquil Campbell delivers the refrain with manic relish and co-vocalist Amy Millan's relentless enthusiasm wins over a reluctant crowd. Often they join forces Gainsbourg and Bardot-style, creating a little sexual tension to keep things from getting too mawkish. Take the whimsical 'The First Five Times', where a giggling couple recollect their courtship - or rather, places they left embarrassing upholstery stains.

Big singles 'Ageless Beauty' and 'Set Yourself on Fire' go down best with the devotees down front. Ultimately, it's 'Elevator Love Letter' that seals the deal. Millan and Campbell wring every last ounce of emotion from it, belting out the chorus with wide eyes pleading: "Elevator, elevator, take me home."

Stars aren't trying to be sea-deep or razor-sharp: they just want you to come along for the ride.



ARTIST: MY AMERICAN HEART  
ALBUM: HIDING INSIDE THE HORRIBLE WEATHER  
REVIEW: STEPHEN MITCHELL  
DATE: OUT NOW



Attitudes to certain types of music are inevitably shaped by preconceptions that have grown to summarise an entire style. 'Emo' is a case in point - since evolving into a mainstream category it has been plagued with accusations of self-pitying lyrical tendencies. It is apparent that My American Heart have nothing further to offer, or so the first track's opening couplet: "Your name is devastation, you filled us with frustration" would suggest.

Granted, My American Heart have enthusiasm and there is definitely an occasional catchiness to wannabee guitar anthems such as 'Moving On' and 'Fantasy'. Yet it appears unlikely there will be anything genuinely attractive to a listener hoping for more than a few self-absorbed sentiments presented in a slick but essentially empty fashion. Perhaps it is telling that the few impressive moments are when the band stray from the formalism of overly robust numbers such as 'Boys! Grab Your Guns'. 'Dangerous' just about deviates from the emotionally unconvincing furrow of the rest of the album, with its slower pace and an organ-enhanced, multi-textured guitar piece.

Unfortunately, despite the (very) brief glimpses of complexity shown at (rare) points, the inclusion of a track named 'Tired and Uninspired' appears apt.