

Overzicht van CD's gekocht in 2009.

Hurricane – Grace Jones

After 19 years, Grace Jones finally releases a new studio album, and it's a weird one, nostalgic and timeless in equal measure. Her collaborators (including [Brian Eno](#), [Tricky](#), [Wendy & Lisa](#), [Sly & Robbie](#), [Tony Allen](#), and others) set up instrumental backdrops that explicitly recall not only her own early-'80s albums, but also those albums' influence on the later work of [Massive Attack](#), [Tricky](#), et al. At the same time, Jones' old lyrical persona – the androgynous cyber-demon who uses scorn as an erotic weapon – has been largely abandoned; only on "Corporate Cannibal" does that version of her reappear, atop a track that sounds inspired by [Massive Attack](#)'s "Inertia Creeps." Instead, we get a nostalgic, autobiographical Grace Jones, which is interesting and pretty much totally unexpected. The songs "William's Blood" and "I'm Crying (Mother's Tears)" find the now 60-year-old Jones looking back on her childhood in Jamaica, recalling her mother singing in church and comforting her as a nightmare-stricken little girl. Her voice changes on these songs; her accent grows thicker, abandoning the female-Terminator delivery of classic tracks like "Nightclubbing" and "Pull Up to the Bumper" in favor of a voice that's like a more gravelly [Sister Carol](#). Of course, age has put a few crinkles into her throaty delivery, which helps when she ramps up the aggression on songs like "This Is" and the title track (a collaboration with [Tricky](#)); she's as scary as ever, when she wants to be. A calculated look back to her glory days and even earlier, *Hurricane* is possibly Grace Jones' most focused artistic statement and a worthy sequel to her classic early-'80s albums.



Tina! – Tina Turner



Only the two unreleased tracks ...
It would be a crime,
I'm ready

KnuffelRock Vol.20 – Various Artists

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Americana – Roch Voisine



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Sauf Si l'Amour – Roch Voisine

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Raising Sand – Robert Plant & Alison Krauss



What seems to be an unlikely pairing in the duo of former – and future apparently – **Led Zeppelin** vocalist Robert Plant and bluegrass superstar **Alison Krauss** is actually one of the most effortless-sounding pairings in modern popular music. The bridge seems to be producer **T-Bone Burnett** and the band assembled for this outing: drummer **Jay Bellerose** (who seems to be the session drummer in demand these days), upright bassist **Dennis Crouch**, guitarists **Marc Ribot** and **Burnett**, with **Greg Leisz** playing steel here and there, and a number of other guest appearances. **Krauss**, a monster fiddle player, only does so on two songs here. The proceedings are, predictably, very laid-back. **Burnett** has only known one speed these last ten years, and so the material chosen by the three is mostly very subdued. This doesn't make it boring, despite **Burnett's** production, which has become utterly predictable since he started working with **Gillian Welch**. He has a "sound" in the same way **Daniel Lanois** does: its edges are all rounded, everything is very warm, and it all sounds artificially dated. (Anyone looking for the adventurous bravery he put into **Sam Phillips' Martinis & Bikinis** will be disappointed.) Speaking of **Phillips**, her "Sister Rosetta Goes Before Us" is a centerpiece on this set. It has **Phillips'** fingerprints all over it; she recorded it herself already and has her own version on her website. This tune, with its forlorn, percussion-heavy tarantella backdrop, might have come from a **Tom Waits** record were it not so intricately melodic – and **Krauss'** gypsy swing fiddle is a gorgeous touch. There is an emptiness at the heart of longing particularly suited to **Krauss'** woody voice, and Plant's harmony

vocal is perfect, understated yet ever-present. It's the most organically atmospheric tune on the set – not in terms of production, but for lyric and compositional content. Stellar.

Plant's own obsession with old rockabilly and blues tunes is satisfied on the set's opener, "Rich Woman," by [Dorothy LaBostrie](#) and [McKinley Miller](#). It's all swamp, all past midnight, all gigolo boasting. [Krauss'](#) harmony vocal underscores Plant's low-key crooned boast as a mirror, as the person being used and who can't help it. [Rollie Salley's](#) "Killing the Blues" sounds like it was recorded by [Lanois](#), with its cough syrup guitars, muffled tom toms, and played-in-bedroom atmospherics. Nonetheless, the two vocalists make a brilliant song come to life with their shared sorrow, and it's as if the meaning in the tune actually happens between its bitter irony in the space between the two vocalists as the whine of [Leisz's](#) steel roots this country song in the earth, not in the white clouds reflected in its refrain. There is a pair of [Gene Clark](#) tunes here as well. Plant is a [Clark](#) fan, and so it's not a surprise, but the choices are: "Polly Come Home" and "Through the Morning, Through the Night" come from the second [Dillard & Clark](#) album from 1969 with the same title as the latter track. The first is a haunting ballad done in an old-world folk style that [Clark](#) would have been proud of. It reflects the same spirit and character as his own [White Light](#) album, but with Plant and [Krauss](#), the spirit of Celtic-cum-Appalachian style that influenced bluegrass, and the Delta blues that influenced rock, are breached. "Through the Morning, Through the Night" is a wasted country love song told from the point of view of an outlaw. Plant gets his chance to rock – a bit – in [the Everly Brothers'](#) "Gone Gone Gone (Done Moved On)." While it sounds nothing like the original, Plant's pipes get to croon and drift over the distorted guitars and a clipped snare; he gets to do his trademark blues improv bit between verses. To be honest, it feels like it was tossed off and, therefore, less studied than anything else here: it's a refreshing change of pace near the middle of the disc. It "rocks" in a roots way.

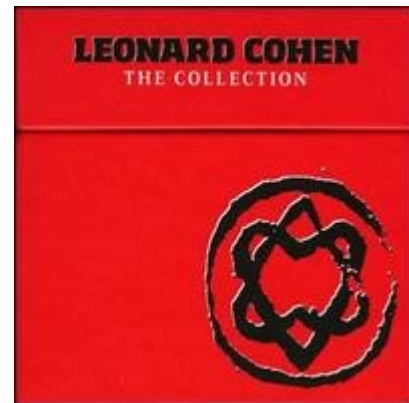
"Please Read the Letter" is written by Plant, [Page Charlie Jones](#), and [Michael Lee](#). Slow, plodding, almost crawling, [Krauss'](#) harmony vocal takes it to the next step, adds the kind of lonesome depth that makes this a song whispered under a starless sky rather than just another lost love song. [Waits](#) and [Kathleen Brennan's](#) "Trampled Rose," done shotgun ballad style, is, with the [Phillips](#) tune, the most beautiful thing here. [Krauss](#) near the top of her range sighs into the rhythm. [Patrick Warren's](#) toy piano sounds more like a marimba, and his pump organ adds to the percussive nature of this wary hymn from the depths. When she sings "You never pay just once/To get the job done," this skeletal band swells. [Ribot's](#) dobro sounds like a rickety banjo, and it stutters just ahead of the bass drum and tom toms in [Bellerose's](#) kit. [Naomi Neville's](#) "Fortune Teller" shows [Burnett](#) at his best as a producer. He lets Plant's voice come falling out of his mouth, staggering and stuttering the rhythms so they feel like a combination of Delta blues, second-line New Orleans, and Congo Square drum walk. The guitar is nasty and distorted, and the brush touches with their metallic sheen are a nice complement to the bass drums. It doesn't rock; it struts and staggers on its way. [Krauss'](#) wordless vocal in the background creates a nice space for that incessant series of rhythms to play to.

The next three tunes are cagey, even for this eclectic set: [Mel Tillis'](#) awesome ballad "Stick with Me Baby" sounds more like [Dion & the Belmonts](#) on the street corner on cough syrup and meaning every word. There is no doo wop, just the sweet melody falling from the singers' mouths like an incantation with an understated but pronounced rhythm section painting them singing together in front of a burning ash can. This little gem is followed by a reading of [Townes Van Zandt's](#) "Nothin'" done in twilight [Led Zeppelin](#) style. It doesn't rock either. It plods and drifts, and crawls. [Krauss'](#) fiddle moans above the tambourine, indistinct and distorted; low-tuned electric guitars and the

haunted, echoing banjo are a compelling move and rescue the melody from the sonic clutter – no, sonic clutter is not a bad thing. The weirdest thing is that while it's the loudest tune on the set, it features [Norman Blake](#) on acoustic guitar with [Burnett](#). This is what singer/songwriter heavy metal must sound like. And it is oh-so-slow. The final part of the trilogy of the weird takes place on [Little Milton Campbell's](#) "Let Your Loss Be Your Lesson," a jangly country rocker in the vein of [Neil Young](#) without the weight and creak of age hindering it. [Krauss](#) is such a fine singer, and she does her own Plant imitation here. She has his phrasing down, his slippery way of enunciating, and you can hear why this was such a great match-up. The band can play backbone slip rockabilly shuffle with their eyes closed and their hands tied behind their backs, and they do it here. It's a great moment before the close. The haunting, old-timey "Your Long Journey by A.D. and Rosa Lee Watson," with its autoharp (played by [Mike Seeger](#) no less), [Riley Baugus'](#) banjo, [Crouch's](#) big wooden bass, and [Blake's](#) acoustic guitar, is a whispering way to send this set of broken love songs off into the night. These two voices meld together seamlessly; they will not be swallowed even when the production is bigger than the song. They don't soar, they don't roar, they simply sing songs that offer different shades of meaning as a result of this welcome collaboration.

The Collection – Leonard Cohen

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Zingt Ann Christy (Een beetje Annders) – Free Souffriau



Free Souffriau is a Flemish actress and singer who made her solo album debut in 2009. As an actress, she is best-known for her lead role in the popular Studio 100 television series *Mega Mindy*. Born Frédérique Souffriau on February 8, 1980, in Ghent, Belgium, she began her performance career as a musical actress in the late '90s. At the turn of the century she began a fruitful career as a television actress in association with Studio 100. A couple years later Souffriau made her solo debut as Free Souffriau with the album *Zingt Ann Christy: Een Beetje Annders* (2009), a tribute to Belgian songwriting legend [Ann Christy](#) released on Studio 100. The album was a number one smash hit in Flanders and includes the single "Dag Vreemde Man."

Return of the Dragonfly – Joshua Kadison

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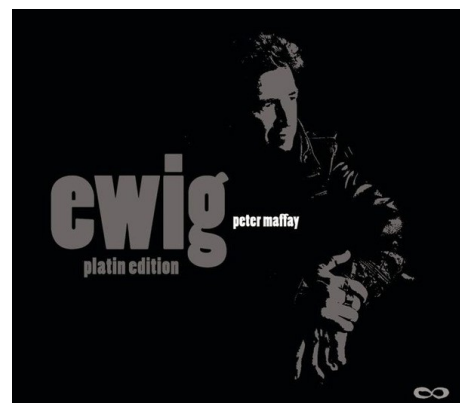
The Venice Beach Sessions(Complete) – Joshua Kadison



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Ewig – Peter Maffay

1. Schnee, Der Auf Rosen Fällt
2. Der Mensch Auf Den du Wartest
3. Es Gibt Zum Glück Noch Die Liebe
4. Die Liebe Bleibt
5. In Dir Ist Immer Noch Ein Licht
6. Auf Den Scherben Unserer Welt
7. Meine Welt
8. Ich Kann Wenn Ich Will
9. Du Bist Göttlich
10. Leb Dein Leben
11. Meine Musik
12. Wie Im Himmel
13. Ewig



The Boy Who Knew Too Much – Mika



Making an album even more vibrant than *Life in Cartoon Motion* would have been difficult for Mika. On *The Boy Who Knew Too Much*, he doesn't try to top himself; instead, he reins in just enough of his debut's indulgent tendencies to let his gift for great melodies and hooks be the focus. His multifaceted pop sounds a little calmer and a lot more confident here – rather than cramming songs with moments intended to impress that end up being overwhelming, "Dr. John"'s finger-popping minor fall and major lift and the calypso-tinged "Blue Eyes" actually are impressive because they're so direct. While *Life in Cartoon Motion* was remarkably engaging, occasionally it felt like Mika was more skilled at pastiche than presenting his own sound. Here, Mika and producer **Greg Wells** fashion songs that sound truly distinctive; though touches of inspirations and peers like **Elton John**, **the Bee Gees**, and **the Scissor Sisters** still pop up, the musician Mika borrows from most on *The Boy Who Knew Too Much* is himself. The album's opening trio of tracks nods to his debut's most vivid moments without copying them: "We Are Golden" is every bit as sunshiny as "Love Today"; "Blame It on the Girls" builds on "Grace Kelly"'s sleek style; and "Rain" is a kissing cousin to "Relax"'s pulsing, melancholy disco-pop. Mika tries a few different sounds on for size, most notably on "Toy Boy," a subversively sweet singsong that lies somewhere between **Elvis Presley's** "Wooden Heart" and **the Dresden Dolls'** "Coin Operated Boy," and the torchy finale, "Pick Up Off the Floor." While ballads still aren't his forte, slower tracks like the **Imogen Heap** collaboration "By the Time" offer welcome breathing room from "One Foot Boy" and the album's other almost ridiculously catchy tracks. Anyone who liked *Life in Cartoon Motion's* bright, brash approach won't be disappointed by *The Boy Who Knew Too Much* – it's clear Mika knows exactly what he's doing.

The Essential – Trijntje Oosterhuis & Total Touch

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Maverick – Sven Van Hees



Sonic Boom – Kiss

In the 11 years since their last album, the big and bloated *Psycho Circus*, the reunited, original, make-up wearing Kiss split once again when **Ace Frehley** and **Peter Criss** hit the door. In a shocking move that disgusted Kiss purists, remaining members **Paul Stanley** and **Gene Simmons** decided that **Ace** and **Peter's** characters were up for grabs, and handed the make-up over to their new guitar-playing spaceman, **Tommy Thayer**, and their catman 2.0, **Eric Singer**, for subsequent tours. It was hardly the first time **Paul** and **Gene** were painted as an anything-for-a-buck duo – they've licensed everything from Kiss action figures to Kiss caskets after all – but maybe, just maybe, it was a sincere move after all, one designed to please fans. Unlike *Psycho Circus* with **Ace** and **Peter**, *Sonic Boom* with **Tommy** and **Eric** captures the spirit of the original group through simple, unashamedly macho songs that could have appeared on any of their pre-*Destroyer* albums. Lunkheaded lyrics like "The deck is loaded when I like what I see" ("Russian Roulette") or "Danger you, danger me, danger us" ("Danger Us") aren't so much an issue when the hooks are as solid and the songs are as exciting as they are here. "Yes I Know (Nobody's Perfect)" is the quintessential **Gene** song with the usual demon bass fills, plenty of cowbell, and "Baby it's time to take off your clothes" lyrics, while the closing "Say Yeah" is a sure fan pleaser, falling somewhere between "Black Diamond" and "Nothin' to Lose." Besides the underlying feeling that there's a bit more smirking than before, there's little sign the original duo have matured, which is good news, but the old-school idea of one song for the spaceman ("When Lightning Strikes") and one for the cat ("All for the Glory") should've been dropped, as both slow down the proceedings, plus **Eric's** number sings of "We're all for one and we're all for the glory" with absolutely no sense of irony. No one will be turned on to the band by *Sonic Boom*, and all the usual criticisms – dumb, sexist, gaudy, and dumb – apply, but the Kiss Army have waited over two decades for something this solid and fun. Pretend this is the back-to-basics follow up to *Love Gun*, and those 20 years of so-so albums fade away. Classic and maybe even a little awesome, *Sonic Boom* makes that "hottest band in the world" tag much easier to swallow.



Absynthe Minded – Absynthe Minded



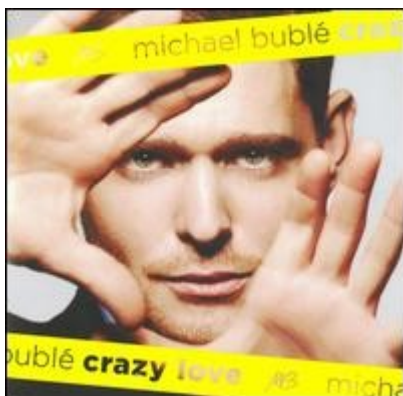
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Das Ohr am Gleis – C-Schulz

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Crazy Love – Michael Bublé



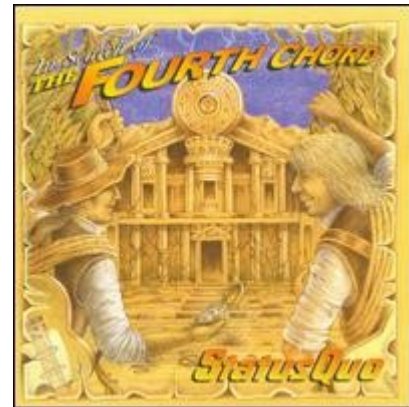
Buoyed by the popularity of the hit contemporary pop ballad "Home," singer Michael Bublé's 2005 album, *It's Time*, clearly positioned the vocalist as the preeminent neo-crooner of his generation. Bublé's 2007 follow-up, *Call Me Irresponsible*, only further reinforced this notion. Not only had he come into his own as a lithe, swaggering stage performer with a knack for jazzing a crowd, but he had also grown into a virtuoso singer. Sure, he'd never drop nor deny the *Sinatra* comparisons, but now Bublé's voice – breezy, tender, and controlled – was his own. It didn't hurt, either,

that he and his producers found the perfect balance of old-school popular song standards and more modern pop covers and originals that at once grounded his talent in tradition and pushed him toward the pop horizon. All of this is brought to bear on Bublé's 2009 effort, *Crazy Love*. Easily the singer's most stylistically wide-ranging album, it is also one of his brightest, poppiest, and most fun. Bublé kicks things off with the theatrical, epic ballad "Cry Me a River" and proceeds to milk the tune with burnished breath, eking out the drama line by line. It's over the top for sure, but Bublé takes you to the edge of the cliff, prepares to jump, and then gives you a knowing wink that says, not quite yet – there's more fun to be had. And what fun it is with Bublé

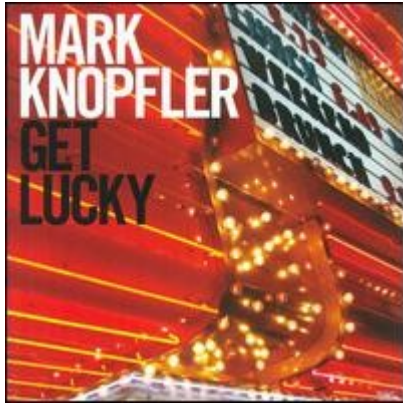
swinging through "All of Me," and killin' **Van Morrison's** classic "Crazy Love" with a light and yearning touch. And just as "Home" worked to showcase Bubl 's own writing abilities, here we get the sunshine pop of "Haven't Met You Yet" – a skippy, jaunty little song that brings to mind a mix of **the Carpenters** and **Chicago**. Throw in a rollicking and soulful duet with **Sharon Jones & the Dap Kings** on "Baby (You've Got What It Takes)," and a fabulously old-school close-harmony version of "Stardust" with Bubl  backed by the vocal ensemble **Naturally 7**, and *Crazy Love* really starts to come together. All of this would be enough to fall in love with the album, but then Bubl  goes and throws in a last minute overture by duetting with fellow Canadian singer/songwriter **Ron Sexsmith** on **Sexsmith's** ballad "Whatever It Takes." A devastating, afterglow-ready paean for romance, the song is a modern-day classic that pairs one of the most underrated and ignored songwriters of his generation next to one of the most ballyhooed in Bubl  – a classy move for sure. The result, like the rest of *Crazy Love*, is pure magic.

Still In Search Of The Fourth Chord – Status Quo

When a band has been recording for over 40 years, they are either still innovative and new or a parody of their former selves. Status Quo fall into the latter category with their 33rd album and 37th appearance in the charts (including hits compilations), *In Search of the Fourth Chord*, which was produced by **Pip Williams**, who had also produced the classics *Rockin' All Over the World*, *Whatever You Want*, and *In the Army Now*. For years the band had been derided for playing a style of boogie blues rock & roll with the obligatory three chords, and on this album, they fight back against the critics with tongues very firmly in cheek as they search for that elusive fourth chord, even, according to the cover art, enlisting the help of Indiana Jones, with both **Rick Parfitt** and **Francis Rossi**, the mainstays of Status Quo, dressed as the intrepid explorer, with the graphics lifted directly from the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* trilogy. As for the music, it was more of what every fan had come to expect: head-banging, guitar-led, riff-heavy music with the band swaying up and down. Status Quo was never afraid to change their style, and "Electric Arena" is a slow blues number while "Hold Me" borrows a riff from **Chris Rea's** "Auberge." Although "Pennsylvania Blues Tonight" is a drum beat- and bass-led chugger with the guitars left very much in the background, "Tongue Tied" is an acoustic ballad reminiscent of their hit "Living on an Island," and "I Don't Wanna Hurt You Anymore," "Bad News," and "Gravy Train" wouldn't sound out of place on any of their classic 1970s albums.



Get Lucky – Mark Knopfler

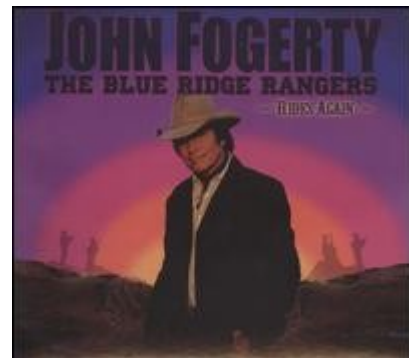


With the release of *Get Lucky*, Mark Knopfler has made as many solo studio albums as he made group studio albums with *Dire Straits*, which may be a signal that it's time to stop comparing his two careers and simply accept them as separate entities. Of course, since Knopfler was the lead singer, chief instrumentalist, and songwriter for *Dire Straits*, there are obvious similarities, even if he has taken a deliberately different path as a solo artist. Basically, he's a lot quieter. "Border Reiver," the first song here, begins with a pennywhistle and a piano, then strings join in. Soon

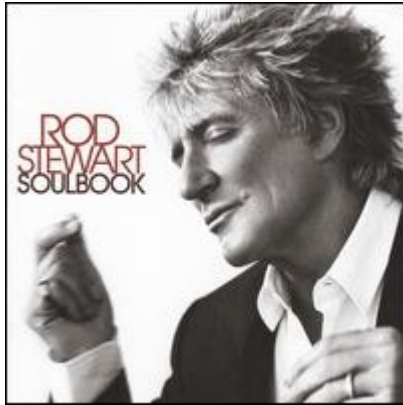
enough, Knopfler's distinctive conversational baritone begins calmly intoning lyrics, and eventually there are examples of his melodic fingerpicked guitar style on both acoustic and electric. He even works up to a smoldering swamp rock shuffle, à la *J.J. Cale*, on "Cleaning My Gun." But that's as close as he comes to really rocking out. More typical is "Hard Shoulder," a ballad that employs a twangy guitar sound and comes across as a number that *Glen Campbell* could have had a hit with back in his late-'60s "Wichita Lineman" heyday. The tunes support Knopfler's story-songs and musical character studies, as he describes or embodies truck drivers ("Border Reiver"), itinerant workers ("Get Lucky"), guitar makers ("Monteleone"), and sailors ("So Far from the Clyde"), among others, painting a portrait of pastoral and blue-collar life in the British Isles some time in the past. This Glasgow-born guitarist comes by the Celtic influence honestly, of course, but he seems to be trying to create his own pseudo-traditional repertoire of what often sound like old folk songs. That's certainly one of the things he was trying to do in *Dire Straits*. "Remembrance Day" here is similar in tone to *Dire Straits'* "Brothers in Arms," but then so is much of Knopfler's solo work; old fans still may lament that there isn't much that sounds like "Sultans of Swing" or "Money for Nothing."

The Blue Ridge Rangers Ride Again – John Fogerty

John Fogerty released his first solo CD, an album of covers on which he played all the instruments, under the name the "Blue Ridge Rangers," and he revives that concept on 2009's *The Blue Ridge Rangers Ride Again*. Where the first smacked of the righteous zeal of a young purist, *Ride Again* is a lot looser in its attack, something reflected in how it splits the difference between country and rockabilly classics and reflective numbers from '70s songwriters. These unexpected covers of *John Prine*, *Delaney & Bonnie*, and *John Denver* offer a peek at a sweeter, gentler Fogerty, a Fogerty who can also be heard on how he lays back instead of pushing ahead on *Buck Owens'* "I Don't Care (Just as Long as You Love Me)" and *Ray Price's* "I'll Be There," and even on his revamp of his own neglected swamp rocker "Change in the Weather." He can still raise an unholy ruckus, wailing his way through *Gene Simmons'* rockabilly classic "Haunted House" and joyously duetting with *Bruce Springsteen* on the *Everlys'* "When Will I Be Loved," but *Ride Again* isn't a raucous rock & roll album, it's a relaxed good time, a little bit of cheerful nostalgia that's pretty charming.



Soulbook – Rod Stewart



Continuing his stroll through pop's backpages, Rod Stewart moves on from "The Great Rock Classics of Our Time" and dives into the *Soulbook*, shorthand for all the great Motown and soul songs that still are in heavy rotation on oldies radio well into the new millennium. Apart from an oddly funkified spin of [Sam Cooke's](#) "Wonderful World," and a version of [Jackie Wilson's](#) "(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher" that illustrates just how much range he's lost over the years, Rod doesn't spend much time with the soul and blues singers so influential on him, choosing instead to run through a bunch of Motown hits – a full six of the 13 songs here are from the Motor City – adding a couple of smooth soul hits from the early '70s, plus [Chuck Jackson](#) and [Maxine Brown's](#) "Let It Be Me," which gives him an opportunity to duet with [Jennifer Hudson](#). All this is firmly within Stewart's wheelhouse, perhaps too much so, an impression not helped by the overly familiar arrangements, right down to [Stevie Wonder](#) reprising his harmonica on "My Cherie Amour" – these are all designed to evoke memories, not to dig into the heart of the songs. It's all pleasing enough, flowing better than the American Songbook albums, and not feeling as karaoke as the Rock album, but it's so comfortable, so easygoing, it verges on the forgettable.

Reality Killed the Video Star – Robbie Williams

Robbie Williams' *Rudebox* was one of the most enjoyable records of his career, but it wasn't a commercial success. Its follow-up, *Reality Killed the Video Star*, attempts to right the ship, and as such, it becomes everything its predecessor was not. Recorded with a single producer, the estimable [Trevor Horn](#), but encompassing songs and sessions with a variety of writing partners ([Guy Chambers](#) and [Soul Mekanik](#), among others), the songs sound rushed and the performances lackluster. Given an MOR blockbuster production by [Horn](#), and with arrangements by his longtime co-writer [Anne Dudley](#), *Reality Killed the Video Star* certainly has the sound it needs to succeed with Williams' aging audience and clean up on [BBC Radio 2](#). Granted, Robbie Williams is an excellent ballads singer, well-suited for this grandiose backing, but unfortunately the lyrics don't stand up to the pressure. "Blasphemy" has the worst offenders, beginning with "What's so great about the great depression?/Was it a blast for you? 'Cause it's blasphemy." One song later, Williams declares "This is a song full of metaphors," then fills it with a chorus beyond mindless: "Do, ooh ooh, ooh, ooh ya mind/If I, I-I, I, I, I-I-I touch you?" At least the album is front-loaded with quality, beginning with "Morning Sun," the best and most deeply felt song on the album. Apparently written after the death of [Michael Jackson](#), it begins with a classic example of the taken-two-ways lyric: "How do you rate the morning sun." Second is "Bodies," the first song to be released from the album, and it's the last glimpse of clear quality and inventiveness on the entire album. *Reality Killed the Video Star* may not be a denouement for Robbie Williams; it's not decidedly worse than 2002's *Escapology*, it's just bad in a different way. Whereas *Escapology* found Robbie disappearing into his own neuroses, this one is a hopeless



mélange of satire and sincerity where, from song to song, neither can immediately be distinguished.

The Fall – Norah Jones



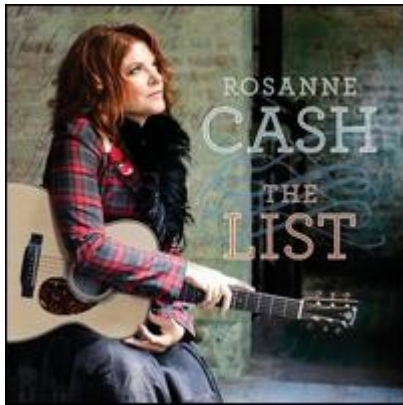
With *The Fall*, Norah Jones completes the transition away from her smooth cabaret beginnings and toward a mellowly arty, modern singer/songwriter. Jones began this shift on 2007's *Not Too Late*, an album that gently rejected her tendencies for lulling, tasteful crooning, but *The Fall* is a stronger, more cohesive work, maintaining an elegantly dreamy state that's faithful to the crooner of *Come Away with Me* while feeling decidedly less classicist. Some of this could be attributed to Jones' choice of producer, **Jacquire King**, best-known for his work with **Modest Mouse** and **Kings of Leon**, but **King** hardly pushes Norah in a rock direction; *The Fall* does bear some mild echoes of **Fiona Apple** or **Aimee Mann** in ballad mode, but its arrangements never call attention to themselves, the way that some **Jon O'Brien** productions do. Instead, the focus is always on Jones' voice and songs, which are once again all originals, sometimes composed in conjunction with collaborators including her longtime colleagues **Jesse Harris**, **Ryan Adams**, and **Will Sheff** of **Okkervil River**. In addition to **King's** pedigree, the latter two co-writers suggest a slight indie bent to Jones' direction, which isn't an inaccurate impression – there's certainly a late-night N.Y.C. vibe to these songs – but it's easy to overstate the artiness of *The Fall*, especially when compared to *Not Too Late*, which wore its ragged ambitions proudly. Here, Jones ties up loose ends, unafraid to sound smooth or sultry, letting in just enough dissonance and discord to give this dimension, creating a subtle but rather extraordinary low-key record that functions as a piece of mood music but lingers longer, thanks to its finely crafted songs.

Laut & Leise – Peter Maffay

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The List – Rosanne Cash



After the dark and chilling themes of 2006's *Black Cadillac*, which saw Rosanne Cash dealing with the deaths of her mother, *Vivian Liberto*, her father, *Johnny Cash*, and her stepmother, *June Carter Cash* – all of whom passed within a two-year span – one might assume that her next project would move into an even deeper level of bleakness, but with *The List*, it's immediately clear that she has instead found a more measured place to stand, and it's a lovely and redemptive outing that looks back to go forward. When Cash turned 18, her father, alarmed that his daughter only knew the songs that were getting played on the radio, gave

her a list of what he considered 100 essential American songs; Cash kept that list, and now she's drawn on it for this wonderfully nuanced outing that brims with a kind of redemptive timelessness. *The List* is a renewal and a testament to life, and it belongs to her father as much as it belongs to her, a beautiful restatement of her father's passions, only now, they've become his daughter's treasures, as well. It's an affirming story, but that's all it would be if Cash didn't sing her heart out here. And she does sing her heart out. The opener, a version of *Jimmie Rodgers'* "Miss the Mississippi and You," is full of comfortable grace and sentiment, and Cash keeps that fine emotional tone throughout this set. Songs like the folk classic "500 Miles" feel at once both lovingly rendered and reborn for a new century in Cash's hands, and she doesn't update them so much as find redemption and solace in them, which in turn gives these songs a bright relevance, and because of the connection to her father and the list he gave to her, it also feels like a deep personal statement. There's so much to take comfort in here, including her fine rendering of *Bob Dylan's* "Girl from the North Country," a nice turn at *Harlan Howard's* "Heartaches by the Number" (which features *Elvis Costello*), a calm but still spooky duet with *Jeff Tweedy* on the faux-murder ballad "Long Black Veil," and a duet with *Bruce Springsteen* on *Hal David* and *Paul Hampton's* "Sea of Heartbreak." Cash sings with a calm, measured authority, and all these the songs fit together with the same sort of refreshing resignation and care. Contemporary country radio probably won't touch anything here, since country these days seems to be more about name-checking than any actual preservation, but Cash is after something else again – it's about connecting with the past and carrying it forward as an act of personal faith. It has nothing to do with hats or belt buckles.

Americana II – Roch Voisine

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