

## Overzicht van CD's gekocht in 2011.

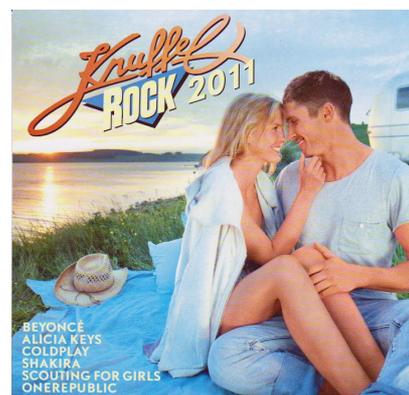
### 21 – Adele



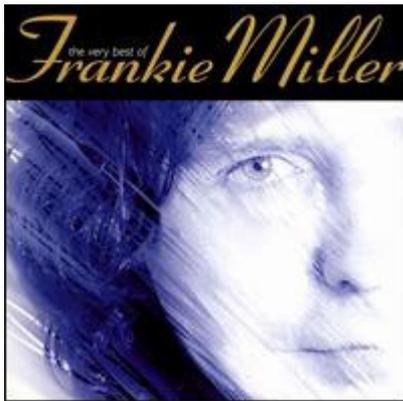
Adele's 2009 debut album, *19*, was a Grammy-winning smash hit that revealed the British singer/songwriter's knack for bittersweet soul and folk-infused love songs that brought to mind an infectious mix of Dusty Springfield and Terry Callier. The album earned her a ton of fans, and interest was high for the inevitable follow-up. In many ways, her sophomore album, the similarly age-appropriate-titled *21*, is a continuation of the sounds and themes Adele was working with on *19*. She is still the bluesy pop diva with a singer/songwriter's soul and seemingly bottomless capacity for heartbreak. If the tastefully organic production and overabundance of well-known co-writers come off a bit too on-the-nose in terms of delivering to fan expectations, then the best thing the album does is to showcase Adele's titanic vocal ability, which -- more than a few times on *21* -- is simply spine-tingling. Last time around we got the gauzy, Callier-esque folk-soul ballad "Daydreamer" to slowly draw us into the album; here, Adele immediately injects us with the propulsive gospel fever-blues anthem "Rolling in the Deep." While the track certainly owes a heavy debt to the punk-blues of Beth Ditto and the Gossip, it is also ridiculously sexy and one of the best singles of any decade -- and, unfortunately, completely sets the bar way too high for everything else on *21*. Which isn't to say that *21* is bad; on the contrary, tracks like the similarly blues-inflected Ryan Tedder co-write "Rumour Has It" and the old-school-style soul cut "He Won't Go" are terrifically catchy, booty-shaking numbers, and exactly the kind of songs you want and expect from Adele. That said, if Adele's voice goes on forever here, so apparently does her appetite for bad relationship mojo. An inordinate amount of the material on *21* is about yearning for lost love. In fact, the centerpiece of the album, the mega-ballad showstopper "Take It All" -- co-written by her "Chasing Pavements" partner Francis White -- begins with Adele proclaiming "Didn't I give it all?" Delivered starkly at first with Adele set against simple piano accompaniment and later backed by a gospel choir, it's an instant-classic sort of song in the tradition of "The Rose," "And I Am Telling You I Am Not Going," and "All by Myself" that could stand over the years as a career landmark for the singer and a cathartic moment for fans who identify with their idol's Pyrrhic lovelorn persona. For others, over the course of the album, that persona and the insistence of track after track of heartbreak can get a bit alienating. Ultimately, however, Adele does give us her all on *21*, and for now that is enough.

### Knuffelrock 2011 – Various Artists

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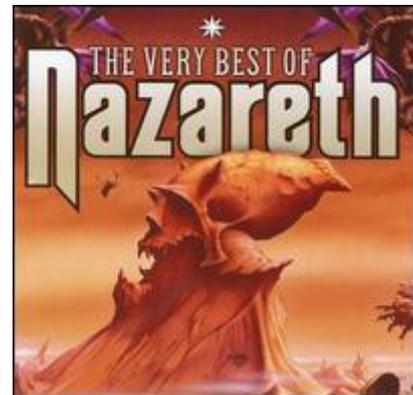
## The Very Best of Frankie Miller – Frankie Miller



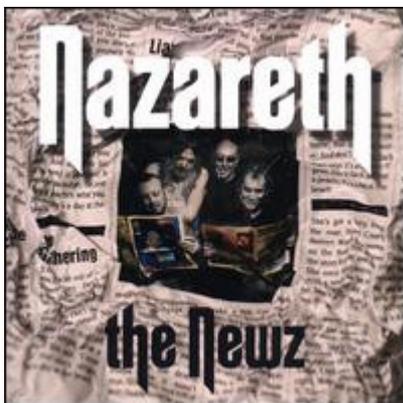
This overview of soulful Scottish singer/songwriter Frankie Miller features his three big hits "Darlin'," "Be Good to Yourself," and "Caledonia," as well as key album cuts like "Highlife/Brickyard Blues" and "I Can't Change It." Miller never found the same amount of success overseas as he did in his native U.K., but his raspy brand of Rod Stewart, Tom Waits and Bob Seger-infused pub rock, blue-eyed soul, and R&B earned him a loyal following that will covet this fine collection of impassioned '70s goodness.

## The Very Best of Nazareth – Nazareth

Very Best of Nazareth spotlights 18 classic tracks recorded for A&M Records by the legendary Scottish hard rock band in the '70s and '80s and includes "Bad Bad Boy," "Love Hurts," "Hair of the Dog," and "Razamanaz." Although this isn't a bad disc, there are far better Nazareth collections available, offering more songs and better sound for not much more money.



## The Newz – Nazareth



Rock & roll can be a thankless business -- you can find yourself in the wilderness for a long stretch even if you have something like a decade's worth of classic top-notch work to be proud of. Nazareth found themselves in that situation, but, against considerable odds, managed to end ten years of recording absence in 2008 with *The Newz*, an unexpected return to form. (By the way, the same rather miraculous creative rejuvenation happened that same spring with their contemporaries Uriah Heep.) Although not at all new in stylistic content, this album is possibly their best since they started losing ground in 1981. It stands up really well in

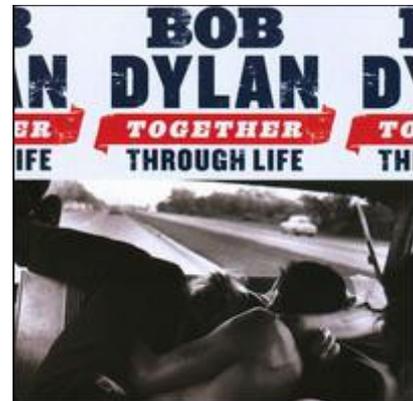
comparison to their classic '70s back catalog, and provides hope that they might just be poised to finally continue with that kind of quality after all those lean decades. Dan McCafferty still leads with the gravel-voiced charge that any AC/DC fan should appreciate, Pete Agnew still mans the bass, his son Lee Agnew now replacing the deceased Darrell Sweet on drums, and Jimmy Murrison, who joined in 1995 (having been in the same band as Lee Agnew at the time), is obviously up to fulfilling the challenge of keeping the sharp Nazareth guitar sound as vital as ever.

Only one warning: when listening to the album in sequence (it's over an hour long), by the end of track five it seems (despite the rather good but heavy tracks "Going Loco" and "Liar") as if things are not really going anywhere, just as one would have feared from an old band that seemed pretty much finished. Then, with track six actually going by the title of

"Warning," the excitement finally kicks in and the album remains a winner from there on in. Still the perennial touring band (worldwide, even during the last ten years without a record contract), Nazareth deliver the requisite "on the road" songs like "Road Trip" and "Keep on Travellin'" (with its neat appropriation of the riff from "Nutbush City Limits"). So again, no change there -- which is a compliment in their case, because they have quite a legacy of great songs on that subject. However, some of the songs do touch on contemporary topics, "Loggin' On" being the most creative highlight, adapting a kind of '80s synth pop-style rhythm (without the synths, mind you) to the Nazareth blues-rock sound. "The Gathering," on the other hand, is another of those tried and tested seven-minute "battle scene epics" so beloved in the world of hard and heavy rock, and the album ends with blues lament "Dying Breed," traditionalist in the best sense. So the triumph here lies not so much in any new(z)ness of the music style, but in the fact that this band can finally deliver again and has started recapturing the spirit and force it had during the '70s.

### **Together Through Life – Bob Dylan**

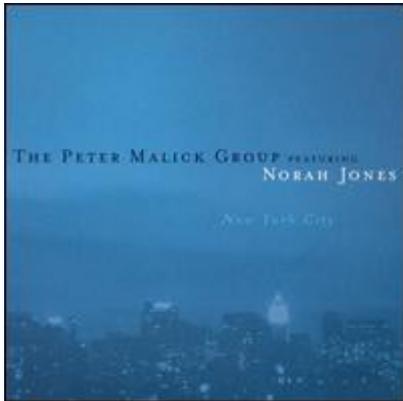
By all accounts, *Together Through Life* arrived quickly, cut swiftly by Bob Dylan and his touring band in the fall of 2008, surprising the label upon its delivery a couple months later, then rushed into stores in April 2009, just half a year after the release of the monumental archive project *Tell Tale Signs*. Given the speed of its creation, it fits that the album has a spontaneous, kinetic kick, feeling so alive that it's a little messy, teeming with contradictions, crossed signals, and frayed ends. That liveliness turns *Together Through Life* into a much lighter affair than its weighty predecessor, *Modern Times*, which was tinged with doom and had



thematic unity, two things missing from this comparatively breezy affair. If *Together Through Life* is about any one thing, it is -- as its title and cover photo elliptically suggest -- the enduring power of romance, how it provides sustenance and how its absence can make life hard. But all this suggests that Dylan has turned in a meditation on the meaning of life and love here, when its core charm is its very modesty. It's an old-fashioned ten tracks, clocking in at 45 minutes, a simple set of songs co-written with Robert Hunter -- Jerry Garcia's lyricist and previous Dylan collaborator, co-writing the irresistibly jaunty "Silvio" in 1988 -- and delivered without adornment, its clean yet earthy production slyly emphasizing the musical variety here. Sonically, this is right in line with Dylan's 2000s albums, the sound of a well-lubricated traveling band easing into the same chords it plays every night, but this isn't strictly roadhouse rock & roll: Dylan remains fixated on pre-rock & roll American music, emphasizing the blues but eager to croon love-struck ballads. In this context, David Hidalgo's accordion -- which appears so often it soon ceases to be noteworthy -- can suggest a romantic stroll down Parisian streets or a steamy sojourn with Doug Sahm in a Tex-Mex border town, but everything here is recognizably, thoroughly Dylan's mythic picturesque America that stretches from the hazy past to the barbed present. While the music is proudly, almost defiantly, rooted in the past, with Dylan borrowing Willie Dixon's "I Just Want to Make Love to You" wholesale for the riotous "My Wife's Home Town," there's no avoidance of the present here, with Bob even going so far as to turn the omnipresent catch phrase "It's All Good" into a mordantly funny rocker. Dylan's not just aware of the modern-day vernacular, he's wound up with an album that fits the spirit of

2009: it's troubled but hopeful, firmly in favor of love and romance, but if that fails there are always romantic dreams and sardonic jokes to get you through life.

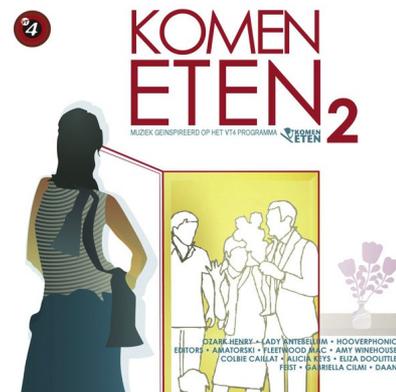
### New York City – Norah Jones & Peter Malick Group



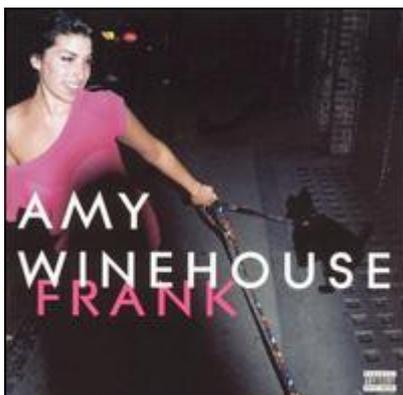
The story goes that, in 2000, while pianist/vocalist Norah Jones was playing regularly at the Living Room in New York's Lower East Side and well before she earned eight Grammys, she received an invitation to sing some blues with guitarist Peter Malick and his band. Reluctantly, Jones admitted to a paucity of blues-singing experience. Thankfully, Malick was persistent. Listening to the rootsy, organic beauty evidenced on *New York City*, you'd never know Jones hadn't ever sung the blues. Inspired by the classic work of artists such as Ray Charles and Billie Holiday, *New York City* is a kind of singer/songwriter blues album featuring Jones' particularly haunting vocal style. It's more mainstream than *Come Away With Me*, but fans of that album should cotton easily to Jones' work here. Conceptualized around the post-9/11 title track, most of Malick's songs are contemporary blues reminiscent of the work of Bonnie Raitt and Eric Clapton. Notably, "Strange Transmissions," a melancholy and atmospheric profession of a love that just can't be denied, showcases Jones as mellow blues diva, while "Heart of Mine" finds the pianist's breathy style perfectly suited to the Bob Dylan nugget. As for leader Malick, he takes the vocal duties on "Things You Don't Have to Do" and graces most of the tracks with his thoughtful and tempered guitar sound.

### Komen Eten 2 – Various Artists

Soundtrack bij de gelijknamige VT4 serie ...



### Frank – Amy Winehouse

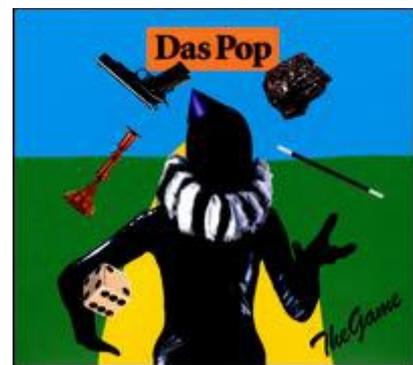


If a series of unfortunate comparisons (like the ones to follow) cause listeners to equate British vocalist Amy Winehouse with Macy Gray, it's only natural. Both come on like a hybrid of Billie Holiday and Lauryn Hill who's had a tippie and then attempted one more late-night set at a supper club than they should have. Despite her boozy persona and loose-limbed delivery, though, Winehouse is an excellent vocalist possessing both power and subtlety, the latter an increasingly rare commodity among contemporary female vocalists (whether jazz or R&B). What lifts her above Macy Gray is the fact that her music

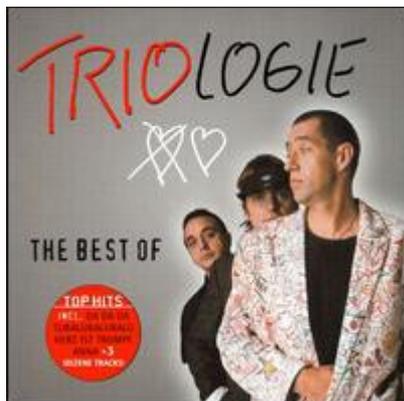
and her career haven't been marketed within an inch of their life. Instead of Gray's stale studio accompaniments, Winehouse has talented musicians playing loose charts behind her with room for a few solos. Instead of a series of vocal mellifluities programmed to digital perfection, Winehouse's record has the feeling of being allowed to grow on its own -- without being meddled with and fussed over (and losing its soul in the process). Simply hearing Winehouse vamp for a few minutes over some Brazilian guitar lines on "You Sent Me Flying" is a rare and immense pleasure. Also, like Nellie McKay (but unlike nearly all of her contemporaries), Winehouse songs like "Fuck Me Pumps," "Take the Box," and "I Heard Love Is Blind" cast a cool, critical gaze over the music scene, over the dating scene, and even over the singer herself. With "In My Bed," she even proves she can do a commercial R&B production, and a club version of "Moody's Mood for Love" not only solidifies her jazz credentials but proves she can survive in the age of Massive Attack.

### **The Game – Das Pop**

1	The Game	4:39
2	Skip The Rope	3:15
3	Flowers In The Dirt	4:08
4	Girl Wolf	2:59
5	Fair Weather Friends	3:44
6	Wronging The Rights	3:20
7	I Me Mine	4:38
8	The Thunder	3:44
9	Gold	4:03
10	A Kiss Is Not A Crime	4:15
11	Yesterday	4:38



### **Triologie – The Best of Trio – Trio**



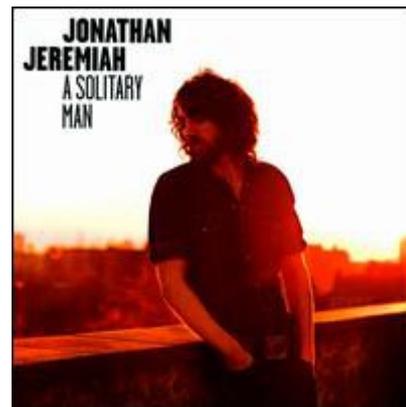
A minimalist German outfit responsible for a number one hit across Europe in 1982, Trio used little more than guitar and drums to frame their monotoned vocals and industrial-based songs. The band's self-titled 1981 debut originally appeared only in their native country, but when the following year's single "Da Da Da" became successful -- it hit number two in England and sold a million copies -- the U.K.'s Mobile Suit Corporation re-released the album with a version of the track. Trio released a cassette-only live album in 1982, and signed to Mercury in the U.S., where their first release was another self-titled work, though only of EP length. Of course, it also included "Da Da Da," and

set the stage for 1983's *Trio & Error*, which had a version of "Da Da Da" *as well*. Finally, in 1983, Trio released an album without a version of their most famous track, and *Bye Bye* proved quite prophetic.

### **A Solitary Man – Jonathan Jeremiah**

With the likes of Rumer, Nerina Pallot, and even Ronan Keating bringing orchestral '60s pop back into fashion, singer/songwriter Jonathan Jeremiah's debut album, *A Solitary Man*, couldn't have been timed any better. Indeed, the London-born vocalist may cite the likes of

Nick Drake, John Martyn, and Cat Stevens as his main influences, but while its 11 tracks are undoubtedly steeped in the sounds of the late '60s/early '70s, it's the timeless lounge-pop of Burt Bacharach that draws the closest comparison. Making full use of his impressive array of guest musicians (the Heritage Orchestra, James Brown's brass section the J.B.'s, Roots drummer Questlove), the likes of opening track "If You Only," the ironically titled "Happiness," and the gorgeous "Lost" are all drenched in the kind of warm layers of strings, gentle horns, and shuffling brushed percussion that defined the songwriting legend's heyday, while Jeremiah's deep gritty baritone is the perfect foil for the sweet soulful melodies and contrasting tales of



relationship woes. The barroom blues of closing track "All the Man That I'll Ever Be" (written at the last minute after his girlfriend became upset that there wasn't a song dedicated to her), the pastoral folk of the title track, and the soothing fingerpicking acoustics of "How Half-Heartedly We Believe" show glimpses of the serious singer/songwriter vibes hinted at through his choice of musical idols. But the album works best when it's in full-on lounge lizard mode, particularly the swaggering soul-blues of "Heart of Stone," which wouldn't sound out of place on a Vegas-era Tom Jones set list, and the big-band swing of "See (It Doesn't Bother Me)." A big voice on young shoulders, *A Solitary Man's* occasional shifts in direction suggests Jeremiah hasn't quite yet figured out exactly what to do with it. But in a scene littered with ten-a-penny acoustic troubadours, he would be wise to stick with its more charming and prevalent multi-layered sound.

### **Super Duper Hits – Joss Stone**

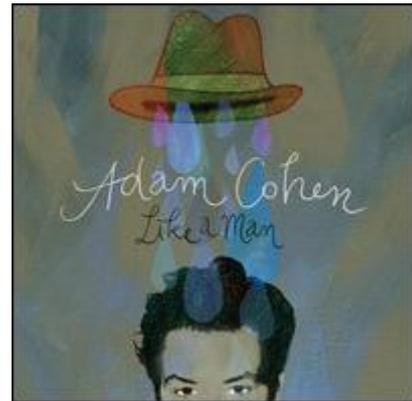


Before she's truly freed from the shackles of EMI, Joss Stone must endure one final indignity: that standard end-of-contract ploy, a greatest-hits album, covering her six years with the label. Every one of her 12 singles for the label is here, with the Jamie Hartman duet "Stalemate" -- originally released on Ben's Brother's 2009 album -- added as a concluding track. If this doesn't dig deep, it nevertheless hits all the highlights -- her White Stripes cover "Fell in Love with a Boy," her Top Ten U.K. hit "You Had Me," "Don't Cha Wanna Ride," her only charting U.S. single "Tell Me 'Bout It," the Common duet "Tell Me What We're Gonna Do Now" -- drawing a

picture of the decade when Stone was always on the cusp of stardom yet never quite truly there. As introductions go, it's a solid one, capturing her potential and promise, alternating between singles frustrating and fun.

## Like a Man – Adam Cohen

Vraag het maar aan pakweg **Axel Merckx** of **Jordi Cruijff**: het is geen geschenk om een carrière uit te bouwen in dezelfde discipline als je beroemde vader. Ook **Adam Cohen** heeft geworsteld met het vervelende etiket 'zoon van...', met als absolute dieptepunten een soundtrack bij een pornografische film en een rap voor een spotje van Adidas. Met zijn derde langspeler *Like a man* treedt Adam stilaan een beetje uit de schaduw van de oude grootmeester. Het is een uitgepuurd, droogkomisch, romantisch en poëtisch album waarop Cohens stem en subtiele klassieke gitaar de boventoon voeren, hier en daar ingekleurd door een zacht zoemend orgel of de warme tonen van **Jennifer Warnes**. Af en toe horen we onvermijdelijk echo's van Leonard Cohens platen uit de jaren zeventig, maar toch lijkt het dat zijn oudste zoon met deze plaat eindelijk zijn eigen stem heeft ontdekt. Misschien niet het werk van een genie, maar wel dat van een vakman: hartverwarmend, ontroerend en universeel herkenbaar voor elke man die ooit verliefd is geweest.



## Mylo Xyloto – Coldplay



Coldplay finally surrender to their essential good nature on *Mylo Xyloto*, their fifth album and first to ditch all pretense of brooding melancholia. Which isn't to say the band doesn't drift along on some pleasingly spacy atmospheres conjured by longtime producer **Brian Eno**: there's still a veneer of classy disaffection that inevitably dissipates due to the relentless sunniness of **Chris Martin** and company. Eno's echoes and ambience -- the only things that still mark Coldplay as anything resembling progressive -- positively sparkle when they meet the band's bright, chipper melodies, yet Coldplay's innate good manners restrain the album, keeping it just this side of a rush of candied pop. Such politeness can verge on the dull -- criminally so when they bring **Rihanna** in for "Princess of China," a duet so toothless she may as well have stayed home -- but *Mylo Xyloto* has a leg up on other Coldplay records for this simple reason: they're no longer attempting to mimic U2's portentous piety. They've embraced their schoolboy selves and are simply singing songs of love and good cheer, albeit on a grand scale that somehow seems smaller due to the group's insuppressible niceness.

## X & Y – Coldplay

After **Radiohead** stubbornly refused to accept the mantle of world's biggest and most important rock band by releasing the willfully strange rocktronica fusion *Kid A* in 2000, Coldplay stepped up to the plate with their debut, *Parachutes*. Tasteful, earnest, introspective, anthemic, and grounded in guitars, the British quartet was everything **Radiohead** weren't but what the public wanted them to be, and benefited from the Oxford quintet's decision to abandon rock stardom for arcane art rock. *Parachutes* became a transatlantic hit and 2002's sequel, *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, consolidated their success by being bigger and better than *Parachutes*, positioning Coldplay to not be just the new **Radiohead**, but the new **U2**: a band that belongs to the world but whose fans believe that the

music is for them alone. To that end, Coldplay's third album, *X&Y* -- slightly delayed so it follows *Rush of Blood* by nearly three years, but that's no longer than the time separating *OK Computer* and *Kid A*, or *The Unforgettable Fire* and *The Joshua Tree* -- is designed to be the record that elevates Coldplay to the major leagues, where they are at once the biggest and most important band in the world. It's deliberate and sleek, cinematic and pristine, hip enough to sample Kraftwerk and blend in fashionable retro-'80s post-punk allusions without altering the band's core. Indeed, *X&Y* is hardly a bold step forward but rather a consolidation of Coldplay's strengths, particularly their skill at crafting surging, widescreen epics. But if *X&Y* highlights their attributes it also brings Coldplay's weaknesses into sharp relief. Forget the fact that they, by any stretch of the imagination, do not rock -- rocking is simply against their nature. They are a meditative band, reflecting on their emotions instead of letting them go in a cathartic blast of noise and rhythm. This isn't a problem -- after all, there have been plenty of great bands that do not rock & roll -- but their terminal politeness does cripple their music, preventing it from being as majestic as its aspirations. Coldplay is well scrubbed and well behaved, possessing a textbook education in classic rock and the good sense to never stretch any farther than needed. They are the perfect middlebrow rock band -- clean, pristine, and rational, seemingly smart since they never succumb to pounding, primal riffs, but also not weird enough to be genuine art rock. It's ambitious, yet its ambitions are modest, not risky, so their ambitions can be fulfilled without breaking a sweat. And since their sweeping yet subdued theatricality does recall the more majestic moments of Radiohead and U2, they have won millions of fans, but another crucial reason that Coldplay have a broad appeal is that lead singer/songwriter Chris Martin never tackles any large issues, preferring to endlessly examine his feelings. Like on *Parachutes* and *Rush of Blood*, all the songs on *X&Y* are ruminations on Martin's doubts, fears, hopes, and loves. His words are earnest and vague, so listeners can identify with the underlying themes in the songs, and his plain, everyman voice, sighing as sweet as a schoolboy, is unthreatening and unassuming, so it's all the easier for listeners to project their own emotions into the song. But for as impeccable as *X&Y* is -- and, make no mistake, it's a good record, crisp, professional, and assured, a sonically satisfying sequel to *A Rush of Blood to the Head* -- it does reveal that Martin's solipsism is a dead-end, diminishing the stature of the band. Where U2 is big in sound, scope, ambition, and intent, Coldplay is ultimately big music about small things, and even if *X&Y* is a strong, accomplished album, its limited, narcissistic point of view is what prevents the quartet from inheriting the title of the biggest and most important band in the world.



### Christmas – Michael Bublé



Christmas is vocalist Michael Bublé's first full-length holiday-themed album since his 2003 EP *Let It Snow*. As with that album, *Christmas* features Bublé backed by small ensembles as well as his big band and orchestra, and includes a handful of classic Christmas songs. In that sense, the album is a rather old-school affair, with Bublé in prime Bing Crosby-meets-Dean Martin vocal style tackling such chestnuts as "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," "Silent Night," and "I'll Be Home for Christmas." There are also some fine, contemporary, if still retro-sounding, pop moments here including Bublé's duet with the British female pop trio the Puppini Sisters on

"Jingle Bells," and his inspired, slightly melancholy reworking of Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas Is You." Ultimately, *Christmas* is a warm and inviting album that showcases Bubl e's impeccable vocal chops.

### **Quid Pro Quo – Status Quo**

Returning from their longest gap between albums in their 43-year history, *Status Quo* appear to have spent the time away reacquainting themselves with the heavier sound of their '70s heyday, judging by their 29th studio release *Quid Pro Quo*. The follow-up to 2007's *In Search of the Fourth Chord* is still quintessentially *Status Quo*, with the jaunty boogie shuffle of "Rock N Roll N You," the no-nonsense driving rock of "The Winner," and the guitar chugging "Let's Rock," whose "I like it, I like it" lyrics are unashamedly similar to those of "Rockin' All Over the World," doing little to suggest the band has found what its predecessor was also looking for. However, the alleged inspiration for *Spinal Tap* do seem to have discovered the "dial eleven," as the majority of its 15 tracks ramp up the heavy rock riffs, extend the guitar solos, and quicken the tempo to produce a back-to-basics affair which might go some way in appeasing any loyal fans dismayed by their recent, woeful collaboration with German techno outfit *Scoter*. Opening track "Two-Way Traffic" bursts out of the blocks with its thunderous *Mot rhead*-esque hooks and head-banging rhythms; "Movin On" is an unashamedly retro slice of frantically paced vintage rock & roll, while there are nods to '60s psychedelica on the acid rock guitars of "Dust to Gold"; '70s prog rock on the quirky synths of "Can't See for Looking," and '80s hair metal with the showboating solos of "Frozen Hero." But other than the *Parfitt*-sung slow blues of "Reality Cheque" and the toe-tapping, country-fused "Anyway You Like It" co-written with hardcore fan Alan Crook, the album never really deviates from its blistering barroom rock formula, while the pro-army lyrical changes made to the unnecessary retread of 1986 hit "In the Army Now" slightly betray the original's anti-war sentiment. The *Quo* may be well into their sixties, but *Quid Pro Quo* sees them perhaps more reinvigorated than they have been since they were half that age, and while it resolutely sticks to what they know best, it's not as one-dimensional as their three-chord reputation suggests.

#### ***Status Quo***



### **Sing It Loud – k.d. Lang**

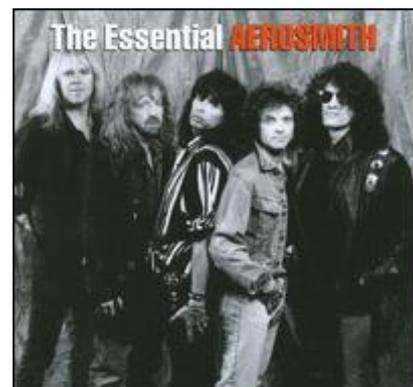


k.d. lang turned her back on the country-influenced music that first earned her fame with 1992's *Ing nue*, and while she's been making consistently fine albums since then, lang's career has often seemed either eclectic or rudderless, depending on how you wish to look at it; she's made a series of albums that have jumped from one stylistic vantage point to another, never settling in one place for long, and while they all feature her genuinely remarkable skills as a vocalist and often impressive songwriting, one rarely gets a sense of stylistic growth from her work since *Ing nue*, if only because she seems to be starting from scratch each time out, without building on what she's done before. So 2011's *Sing It Loud* suggests lang is moving onto a new path that she plans to follow for a while; it features her working with a self-contained band, *the Siss Boom Bang*,

for the first time since she dissolved her old combo *the Reclines*, and *lang* wrote or co-wrote all the songs (except for a cover of *Talking Heads*' "Heaven"), as well as co-producing the set with *Joe Pisapia* (formerly of *Guster*, who also leads the *Siss Boom Bang*). Since the album was recorded in Nashville and the band is heavy on guitars, and even features banjo and pedal steel, some have suggested *Sing It Loud* represent *lang*'s belated return to country music; but in fact, it sounds more like the arty alt-country album she managed *not* to make in the '90s. This album is heavy with deep, mysterious melodic structures and arrangements that use country elements as signifiers, but more eagerly embrace a balance of traditionalism and joyful chaos as off-kilter noises and deep, echoing space punctuate the songs, with the results resembling nothing so much as *Jay Farrar*'s post-*Son Volt* solo work. While the material suggests these similarities come from coincidence rather than design, *lang* and her new band do beat *Farrar* handily at this game; if the songs aren't as immediately memorable as her old country-style numbers, "Sugar Buzz," "The Water's Edge," and "Sorrow Evermore" are direct and purposeful in a way *lang*'s music hasn't been in quite some time, and the music pushes her vocals in a direction that's fresh while still keeping one toe in the familiar territory she can draw on. Folks who were hoping *Sing It Loud* would be *k.d. lang*'s return to the approach of *Absolute Torch & Twang* are going to be left wanting again, but if you've been eager to see her clear out a stylistic direction that's her own and make something of it, this album feels like a strong step in a bold, satisfying new direction.

### **The Essential – Aerosmith**

Over the course of two discs and 30 songs, almost all the heavy-hitters are hauled out for *Essential Aerosmith*, from "Mama Kin" to "Jaded," including both versions of "Walk This Way." Some of the songs are presented in a remixed form -- "Draw the Line," "Pink," "Just Push Play" -- but all of the new mixes are good, possibly even improvements, and the newer song, "Girls of Summer," is strong (its companion, "Lay It Down," isn't as noteworthy). So, all the parts are in place -- why doesn't it feel definitive, then? After all, there are no big songs or hits missing (apart from the cover of "Come Together," which isn't much of a loss), just fan favorites and album tracks like "Lick and a



Promise," and "Chip Away the Stone". The reason it doesn't feel definitive is that the classic Columbia recordings are wrapped up by track ten, and then the best of their late-'80s comeback is wrapped up by the end of the first disc, which leaves disc two pretty much devoted to everything from *Get a Grip* on -- an era not widely considered their best, even though it had a number of hits, plus a couple of good songs along the way ("Crying," "Deuces Are Wild"). So, even though this delivers everything it should and will certainly be the one *Aerosmith* disc most casual listeners will need, it doesn't quite capture the essence of the band the way their greatest albums do (whether they're *Rocks* or *Pump*).