

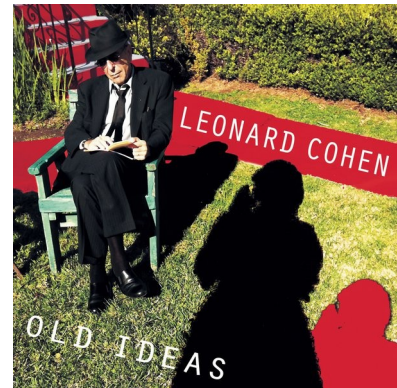
Overzicht van CD's gekocht in 2012.

Radio 2 – 1000 Klassiekers – Vol.3 – Various Artists



Old Ideas – Leonard Cohen

While it's not normally a quality one associates with Leonard Cohen, he's always possessed a droll, self-effacing sense of humor. He expresses it on the opening track of *Old Ideas* in the third person: "I love to speak with Leonard/He's a sportsman and a shepherd/He's a lazy bastard/Living in a suit..." Have no fear, however, Cohen's topical standards, on yearning, struggle, spirituality, love, loss, lust, and mortality are all in abundance here, offered with a poet's insight. It is among Cohen's most spiritual recordings because it brings all of his familiar topics into the fold with a graceful acceptance. He's surrounded by friends on *Old Ideas*. Patrick Leonard,



Dino Soldo, and Anjani Thomas get production and co-writing credits. Sharon Robinson, Dana Glover, Jennifer Warnes, and the Webb Sisters all appear on backing vocals. Cohen mixes up the musical forms far more than he has in the past. The loungey electronic keyboards on "Going Home" are balanced by Glover's female backing chorale, an acoustic piano, and Bela Santelli's violin. The sly, minor-key Gypsy jazz groove on "Amen" is played by a banjo, violin, and Cohen's guitar; it tempers his searing lyric, which posits the notion that the totality of love, divine or otherwise, can only truly be achieved when the object of desire has seen his worst, metaphorically and literally. "Show Me the Place" finds Cohen once again adopting the Protestant hymnal as stirringly as he did on "Halleluja" -- albeit more quietly -- and wedding it to his simple, direct melodic sensibility. The song is a prayer, not for redemption, but to go ever deeper into the cloud of spiritual unknowing before his demise, to discover the terrain where suffering itself is birthed. Warnes' gorgeous backing vocals, piano, guitar, and violin accompany his beneath-the-basement, cracked-leather baritone in delivering the song with conviction and vulnerability.

Cohen's live band joins him on "Darkness," where he evokes, musically, his love of both late-'40s R&B and gospel, even as he frankly discusses his own -- and everyone's -- entrance into the big goodnight. He also revisits the spartan sound of his early career with "Crazy to Love You," written with Thomas, on which his only accompaniment is his acoustic guitar. Here, he wrestles with an unwanted but nonetheless nagging attachment to erotic desire. "Come Healing" is another hymn, with Glover's vocals, church organ, violin, and Cohen's croaking, old-man-in-the-pew vocal; he sings with reverence: "O see the darkness

yielding/That tore the light apart/Come healing of the reason/Come healing of the heart...."
 "Banjo" is a country-blues that gives the songwriter a chance to indulge his love for **Hank Williams** while reflecting on Hurricane Katrina as **Soldo's** New Orleans-inspired horns add a haunted effect to the tune. **Cohen** speaks not only for himself, but the ghosts of restless spirits wandering in his vision. "Lullabye"'s lyrics, accompanied by a high lonesome harmonica and a whispering jazz organ, counterintuitively offer a gentle comfort to the disconsolate. "Different Sides," with its slow, loopy groove, is a shuffle that addresses unresolved conflict in lust and law (spiritual and carnal), bringing **Old Ideas** to a close with an ironic tension. **Cohen** meets conflict head-on and accepts it for what it is -- you can almost see him simultaneously singing sincerely while slyly winking an eye. **Old Ideas** is a very good **Cohen** album; it may be even be a great one; but that doesn't matter in the present. What does is that it bears listening to, over and over (and over) again.

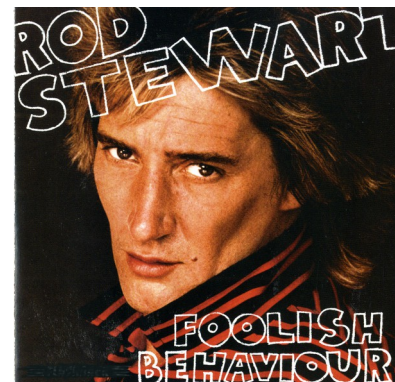
Al Wat Je Lief Is – Various Artists



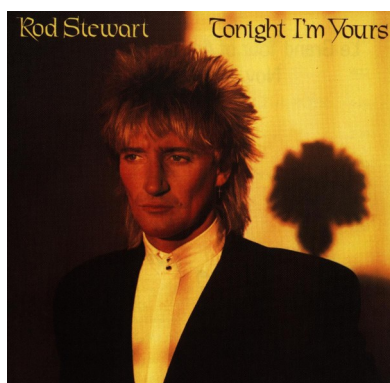
Valentijn 2012 ..

Foolish Behaviour – Rod Stewart

Rod Stewart followed the faux-disco trash of **Blondes Have More Fun** with **Foolish Behaviour**, which sanded out most of the character of the previous album. The result was a bland but professional -- even at their worst, **Rod** and his band are always professionals -- collection, mainly comprised of dance-oriented, lightly synthesized pop/rock. The passionless "Passion" was the hit, but the only worthwhile song was the gorgeous "Oh God, I Wish I Was Home Tonight," which has the clever wit and self-deprecating melancholy of his finest work.



Tonight I'm Yours – Rod Stewart

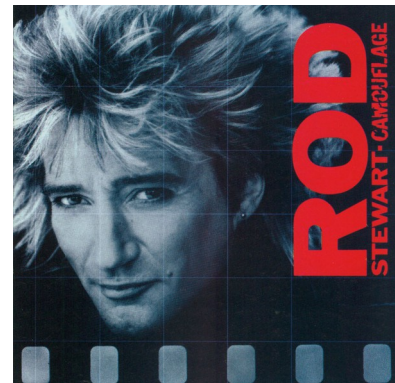


Though it lacks a truly great selection of songs, **Tonight I'm Yours** is a fine latter-day effort from **Rod Stewart**, and one of the last records that makes **Rod** sound like he's hip. Sporting a shiny new wave production, **Tonight I'm Yours** has a sleek, professional sound that can make even mindless rave-ups like "Tora, Tora, Tora (Out With the Boys)" a guilty pleasure. But the key to the album lies in songs like "Tonight I'm Yours" and the haunting "Young Turks," where **Rod** sounds totally at ease with a synth pop beat. They are some of the best examples of mainstream rock co-

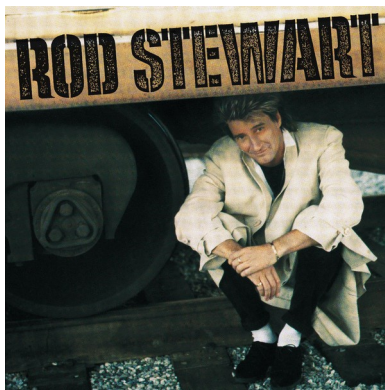
opting the nervy, quirky appeal of new wave, and they make *Tonight I'm Yours* an enjoyable, if lightweight, listen.

Camouflage – Rod Stewart

Camouflage is better than the disastrous *Body Wishes*, but that's only a relative term. Jeff Beck adds the occasional rock guitar flourish, but that doesn't save the faceless material. Again, the two singles -- "Infatuation" and "Some Guys Have All the Luck" -- are fine, ready-made pop hits, but they wear thin after a few plays, and they're the best things on the record.



Every Beat of my Heart – Rod Stewart



Featuring a set of amazingly vapid material -- led by the empty Top Ten hit "Love Touch" -- and an embalmed, mechanical production, Rod Stewart is the worst album the singer recorded. After a series of faceless albums, it's not surprising that the record was uninspired; what was surprising was the utter lack of convincing popcraft. The highlights of the album, "Love Touch" and "Every Beat of My Heart," were the singles but they lacked the well-constructed precision of "Some Guys Have All the Luck," "Infatuation," and "Baby Jane," which leaves Rod Stewart a soulless, and ultimately depressing, album.

Vagabond Heart – Rod Stewart

Rod Stewart continued to regain his strength with *Vagabond Heart*, the follow-up to his comeback album, *Out of Order*. *Vagabond Heart* is a stronger, more diverse album than its predecessor, featuring a more consistent set of songs, including Robbie Robertson's "Broken Arrow" and the hit "Motown Song," as well as a convincing, impassioned performance by Stewart.



For the Good Times – Little Willies

The Little Willies took six years to deliver a second album, but *For the Good Times* sounds like it could have been cut the same afternoon as their 2006 debut. This is by no means a bad thing. The primary pleasure of the Little Willies, the uptown country cabaret covers band fronted by Norah Jones, is their ease, how they can take tunes everybody knows by heart and not so much reinterpret them as freshen them, pulling them ever so slightly toward the jazzier side. Apart from a couple of song selections -- and ones that come close to the beginning of the album, too, as it opens with Ralph Stanley's "I Worship You" and Scotty



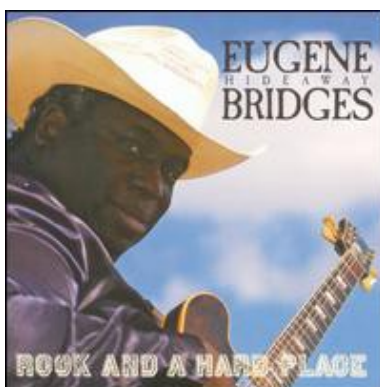
Wiseman's "Remember Me" -- there's nothing unexpected here, but *For the Good Times* doesn't feel lazy; it's cozy and comfortable, a warm bath of an album. Generally, *For the Good Times* rambles along at a relaxed pace, which makes the quickening pulse of "Diesel Smoke, Dangerous Curves" all the more prominent, but for as easy-rolling as this is, there is variety here -- "Fist City" is spirited, "Wide Open Road" provides some barreling good humor, "Jolene" is spare and affecting -- which is just enough to keep *For the Good Times* colorful and quietly engaging.

Secret Symphony (the Secret Sessions) – Katie Melua

Apropos of nothing, Georgian-born chanteuse Katie Melua surprised everyone with 2010's *The House* by hooking up with William Orbit and fusing her familiar brand of coffee table jazz-pop with flourishes of subtle electronica. Perhaps concerned that it failed to top the charts like her previous three records, the 27-year-old has reverted to type for its follow-up, *Secret Symphony*, by returning to mentor Mike Batt, the former Wombles songwriter responsible for her incredible early success. It's a disappointing and frustrating retreat back to safety. Melua's distinctive velvety vocals were always more intriguing than the so-laid-back-they're-horizontal arrangements which surrounded them, but her last effort was an encouraging sign that she could leave her usual dinner party background music firmly behind. And while Batt's contributions here -- such as the drowsy lounge pop of "The Bit That I Don't Get," the steel-laden country balladry of "The Walls of the World," and the yearning, string-soaked title track -- are all typically elegant, demure, and understated affairs, they're so overly polite and ultimately anodyne, they make Eva Cassidy sound like a death metal act. If any more evidence were needed that Batt appears to be restricting her talents, Melua is far more captivating on the self-penned chamber pop of "Forgetting All My Troubles," and the four cover versions included, from the soaring torch song reworking of Ron Sexsmith's "Gold in Them Hills," to the double bass-led shuffle treatment of Fran Healy's "Moonshine," to the straightforward rendition of Françoise Hardy's sultry chanson "All Over the World." *Secret Symphony* is therefore not without its charms, but ultimately it's a clear step backwards from an artist who appeared to be overcoming her notable lack of edge



Rock And A Hard Place – Eugene Hideaway Bridges



Eugene "Hideaway" Bridges possess what everyone else wants, a voice. That voice has an originality that makes listeners ask, "Who's singing?" Bridges' assertive tenor sings with the soulful glide of Sam Cooke and the powerful restraint of B.B. King. As stated in his profile in *Blues Review* 129, Bridges writes all his songs, so he lives the words he sings. And he understands how to blend this voice with Seth Kibel's horn arrangements. Add in Bridges' assertive guitar and you have one of the best records of 2011.

Little Broken Hearts – Norah Jones

Het is Norah Jones menens: ze heeft het gehad met dat muurbloempje dat zich op haar eerste paar albums wegstopte achter zeemzoete deuntjes en omfloerste teksten. Drie jaar geleden brak ze met *The fall* al goeddeels uit haar comfortzone. Ze dumpte haar lief, liet haar band opkrassen en daagde zichzelf uit met Jacquire King, de producer van onder meer Tom Waits. Een stukgelopen relatie verder is er nu de break-upplaat *Little broken hearts*, waarop haar sensuele stem donkere bespiegelingen verklankt.



Haar vijfde album is een intense samenwerking met de wonderdokter Brian Burton alias Danger Mouse, die eerder al Gorillaz, Beck en The Black Keys van een hip geluid voorzag. Zowel tekstueel als muzikaal zoekt Jones nieuwe paden. In haar analyse van liefde en overspel haalt ze enkele keren bijtend uit. Die gedachten trekken krassen in het klankpalet, dat met groovy bassen, twangende gitaren en funky Wurlitzers schaduwrijker is dan we van haar lieve snoetje gewoon zijn.

Haar nieuwe ik benadrukt Jones met een uitdagende hoes, gemodelleerd naar een poster van *Mudhoney*, een cultfilm van sexploitationkoning Russ Meyer. 'Je moet daar niet te veel achter zoeken', zegt Jones in het Londense Covent Garden-hotel terwijl ze een hap van haar pasta neemt. De 33-jarige zangeres, blootsvoets, eenvoudige jeans en shirt, oogt ontspannen. 'Ik ken zijn films wel, krachtige vrouwen met grote borsten, veel geweld, maar daar was het mij niet om te doen.'

Toch lijkt het alsof u zich los wilt maken van het beeld dat mensen van u hebben.

(Kort) 'Niet echt. Op mijn debuut prijkte ik ook met een close-up op de cover. Ik vind dat niet zo verschillend.'

U oogt toch veel sexier en stouter?

'Misschien. Weet je, die poster hing gewoon in de studio bij Brian (Burton, *red.*) tegen de muur. Tijdens de opnames werd ik er altijd naartoe gezogen, hij voelde als een deel van de plaat. De vrouw die erop staat, verleidt en tegelijk ziet ze er ook gevaarlijk uit. Dat vond ik intrigerend. Het is ook heel cartoonesk, met grappige slogans. *A film of ribaldry and violence made from the juice of life!* (*lacht*) Het was alsof die de songs beschreven.'

'Little broken hearts' leest als een script van een film noir. Had u dat in de smiezen voor u de studio indook?

'Nee, dat kwam geleidelijk. Ik ben voor het eerst aan een plaat begonnen zonder voorbereiding, Brian wilde het onbevangen houden. Aanvankelijk vond ik dat beangstigend, maar de ideeën kwamen snel. De teksten bleken vanzelf rond dezelfde onderwerpen te cirkelen. Zonder het te willen, is dit het dichtste dat ik ooit ben gekomen bij een conceptalbum.'

Is het verhaal over de bedrogen vrouw fictie?

'Deels. Ik steek een stuk van mezelf in alles wat ik schrijf, maar je mag de dingen niet te letterlijk nemen ... (*ontwikkend*) In die zin kun je dit album zeker vergelijken met een film: de outfits, de dramatische wendingen, de personages. Dat vind ik zo leuk aan songs schrijven, je kunt alle kanten op.'

In 'Miriam' wil de vrouw wraak nemen op haar rivale. Dat is heftiger dan we van u gewend zijn.

'Tja. Mensen houden veel gedachten en gevoelens voor zichzelf. Daarom is het zo bevrijdend om grote emoties in een song te gieten, want dan kun je ongegeneerd scherp uithalen: *(een grom rolt uit haar keel)* “Nu ga ik je te grazen nemen!, *(lacht)* Maar dat wil nog niet zeggen dat ik écht iemand een kopje kleiner ga maken.'

U klinkt een stuk rauwer dan vroeger. Is dat Burtons inbreng?

'Zou kunnen. Maar de plaat is echt een gezamenlijk werk. Ik ben opgegroeid in Texas met de country van Dolly Parton en Willie Nelson, en met Ray Charles en Billie Holiday. Brian is verzot op donkerdere stuff, obscure sixtiesbands en spaghettiwesterns. Hij neigt naar trage, melancholische muziek. *Little broken hearts* is wat er gebeurt als je twee gelijke delen van elk bij elkaar gooit. Voor mij is dit geen van de pot gerukte koerswijziging.'

The Black Keys beschouwden Burton in de studio als volwaardig bandlid. Is dat zijn geheim?

'Dat vindt hij heel belangrijk, ja. Hij wil niet gewoon even komen aanlopen en een song produceren waar hij niks mee heeft.'

'Ik ken Brian al vier jaar, van toen hij me vroeg om mee te werken aan *Rome*, zijn ode aan de Italiaanse soundtracks. We zijn echt vrienden geworden, daardoor konden we vrijuit werken. Niemand die zich gekrenkt voelde of met opgekropte gevoelens zat als de andere een opmerking maakte.'

'Eigenlijk luister je op deze plaat bijna naar conversaties tussen Brian en mij. We hebben elkaar veel inkijk gegeven in onze levens, hebben bijgeleerd over hoe mannen en vrouwen denken.' *(lacht)*

'Out on the road' drukt het idee van weggaan uit. Wilt u soms uw eigen leven ontvluchten?

'O ja, ik heb de voorbije jaren wel momenten gehad dat ik alles wilde achterlaten, dat ik mijn hoofd wilde leegmaken. Door stress, een break-up. *(kijkt weg)* Soms ben je ook gewoon verveeld.'

'Het succes dat mij tien jaar geleden overviel, heeft me nooit verlamd, maar het bracht wel veel druk mee. Nu, ik heb nooit het gevoel gehad dat ik gepusht werd in een richting die ik niet wilde. Ik had altijd de vrijheid om mijn eigen pad te kiezen. Ik heb in een punkbandje gespeeld, ben gaan acteren, ik kan me uitleven met “The Little Willies” ... Je mag ook niet te veel met dat succes bezig zijn, je moet het wat op afstand houden.'

Is dat makkelijk als je meer dan dertig miljoen albums verkocht hebt?

'Het hangt ervan af hoe zelfverzekerd je in je schoenen staat, en om welke reden je in deze business zit. Succesvol zijn is fantastisch, daar ga ik niet flauw over doen. Maar ik doe dit in de eerste plaats omdat ik van muziek hou, en omdat ik nog altijd beter wil worden.'

Knuffelrock 2012 – Jubileum Editie – Various Artists



Radio 2 Top collectie – Franse klassiekers – Various Artists



Wrecking Ball (Special Edition) – Bruce Springsteen



Heavy lies the crown on Bruce Springsteen's head. Alone among his generation -- or any subsequent generation, actually -- he has shouldered the burden of telling the stories of the downtrodden in the new millennium, a class whose numbers increase by the year, a fact that weighs on Springsteen throughout 2012's *Wrecking Ball*. Such heavy-hearted rumination is not unusual for the Boss. Ever since *The Rising*, his 2002 return to action, a record deliberately tailored to address the lingering anger and sorrow from 9/11, Springsteen has eschewed the frivolous in favor of the weighty, escalating his dry, dusty folk and operatic rock in tandem, all in hopes of pushing the plight of the forgotten into public consciousness. Each of his five albums since *The Rising* have been tailored for the specific political moment -- *Devils & Dust* ruminated over forgotten Americans in the wake of the Iraq war; *We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions* was an election year rallying call; *Magic* struggled to find meaning in these hard times; *Working on a Dream* saw hope in the dawning days of Obama -- and it's no mistake that *Wrecking Ball* fuses elements of all four into an election year state of the union: Bruce is taking stock of where we are and how we've gotten here, urging us to push forward. If that sounds a bit haughty, it also plays that way. Springsteen has

systematically removed any element of fun -- "Mary's Place" is the only original in the past decade that could be called a party song -- along with all the romance or any element of confessional songwriting. He has adopted the mantle of the troubadour and oral historian, telling tales of the forgotten and punctuating them with rallying calls to action. *Wrecking Ball* contains more of the latter than any of its predecessors, summoning the masses to rise up against fatcat bankers set to singalongs lifted from Seeger. There's an unshakable collectivist hootenanny feel on *Wrecking Ball*, not to mention allusions to gospel including a borrowed refrain from "This Train," but Springsteen takes pains to have the music feel modern, inviting Tom Morello to do aural paintings with his guitar, threading some trip-hop rhythms into the mix, and finding space for a guest rap on "Rocky Ground." As admirable as the intent is, the splices between old-fashioned folk protests and dour modernity become too apparent, possibly because there's so little room to breathe on the album -- the last recorded appearance of Clarence Clemons helps lift "Land of Hope and Dreams" above the rest -- possibly because the message has been placed before the music. Springsteen is so focused on preaching against creeping inequality in the U.S. that he's wound up honing his words and not his music, letting the big-footed stomps and melancholy strumming play second fiddle to the stories. Consequently, *Wrecking Ball* feels cumbersome and top heavy, Springsteen sacrificing impassioned rage in favor of explaining his intentions too clearly.

Foo Fighters : Greatest Hits – Foo Fighters

Almost 15 years on from their debut, Foo Fighters deliver their first *Greatest Hits*, a 15-track (16 if the double dip on "Everlong" counts) retrospective covering their six albums from 1995 to 2007. *Greatest Hits* isn't arranged chronologically, which isn't a detriment; if anything, skipping through the years emphasizes just how consistent the Foos have been, always delivering oversized rock & roll where the hooks are as big as the guitars. The only exceptions to the rule are the two lo-fi cuts "Big Me" and "This Is a Call," with "I'll Stick Around" qualifying as this comp's inexplicable omission ("Walking After You," "DOA," "Stacked Actors," and "No Way Back" all also didn't make the cut), plucked from their 1995 debut, where the band was only Dave Grohl recording at home. Apart from this pair of tunes, this is all muscular, melodic modern rock, the kind that Foo Fighters almost patented, and if their consistency has occasionally made their albums blend together, it does result in one strong hits collection.



Relaxing Harp Sounds – Marc Hebbelinck



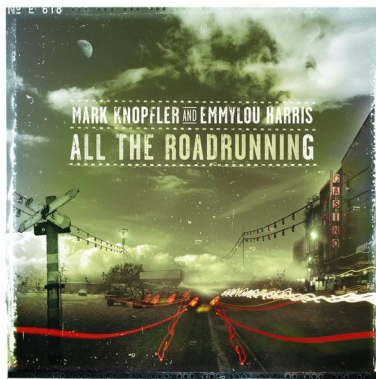
Tijdens een 'guided tour' door Gent, o.l.v. Lex ... in de St.-Baafs Kathedraal aan 't werk gezien. (2012-08-12 – Leonard Cohen Live in Gent)

Vive La France – Vol. 2 – Various Artists

...



All the Roadrunning – Emmylou Harris & Mark Knopfler



This lush and earthy collaboration between Mark Knopfler and Emmylou Harris may sound like it rose from an amiable weeklong studio session, but the 12 tracks that make up *All the Roadrunning* were actually recorded over the span of seven years. The boot-stomping "Red Staggerwing" and the gentle "Donkey Town," both of which were bumped from Knopfler's *Sailing to Philadelphia* record, give the ex-Dire Straits leader a chance to flex his country muscle, while the wistful title track spotlights the lovely Harris, whose playful demeanor and guarded confidence helps keep Knopfler in check during his sometimes excessive soloing. The two couldn't be more at odds vocally, but Knopfler's laconic drawl is like an easy chair for Harris' fluid pipes, and standout tracks like the 9/11-inspired "This Is Goodbye," the wistful "Beachcombing," and the infectious single "This Is Us" come off as effortless statements of vitality from both camps.

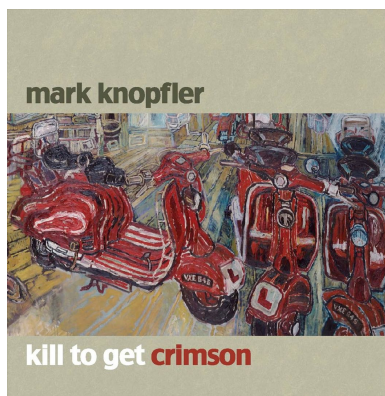
Privateering – Mark Knopfler

Since officially embarking on a solo career in 1995, former Dire Straits frontman Mark Knopfler has been quietly and consistently amassing an unassuming horn of plenty, maintaining his prior outfit's penchant for fusing meticulously crafted English blues-rock with sardonic, radio-ready AOR pop, while introducing elements of traditional folk and country with the effortless gait of an artist who has spent his years as both a student and a professor. On *Privateering*, his seventh solo outing, Knopfler has crafted his most ambitious and pugnacious collection of songs to date, going all in on a two-disc set that pits all of the aforementioned influences against each other without ever succumbing to the convenience of their architectures. Upon first spin, *Privateering* feels a little like a garage sale, offering up long cold plates of once warm, late-night porch jams that feel like pre-studio session warm-ups, but the album's stately yet schizophrenic nature, which pits lo-fi, studious, yet ultimately forgettable exercises in rote American blues like "Hot or What" and "Gator



Blood" with amiable, highway-ready rockers ("Corned Beef City") and incredibly affecting, spooky folk-pop ballads like "Redbud Tree," "Kingdom of Gold," and the magnificent "Dream of the Drowned Submariner," all three of which owe a couple of polite high fives to [Dire Straits](#) songs like "The Man's Strong" and "Brothers in Arms," reveals an artist in complete control of his arsenal. Could the album use some trimming? Sure, but [Knopfler](#) is that rare gunslinger who can make even the wildest shot look like it was completely intentional, and his steady voice, mercurial lyrics, and instantly recognizable guitar tone, that latter of which falls somewhere between the rich, lucid beauty of [David Gilmour](#) and the Pan-like spell-casting of [Richard Thompson](#), provide just the right amount of ballast to keep a ship as big as [Privateering](#) buoyant.

Kill to Get Crimson – Mark Knopfler



Given that [Kill to Get Crimson](#) follows [Mark Knopfler's](#) yearlong collaboration with [Emmylou Harris](#) -- inaugurated by the album [All the Roadrunning](#) and followed by a tour, subsequently documented on the live set [Real Live Roadrunning](#) -- it might be reasonable to presume that it bears a slightly heavier folk influence, as if [Emmylou](#) had rubbed off on the guitarist. And that's true to a certain extent: "Heart Full of Holes" has an old-timey carnivalesque lilt to its middle section and "Secondary Waltz" is simple, low-key two-step driven by accordions, while "The Fish and the Bird" is a spare allegory that recalls old folk tunes, as does the stately grace of "Madame Geneva's." Also, "Let It All Go" (the song that bears the lyric that lends the album the title) is a minor key dirge that could be seen as a winding folk tune, but it hearkens back to the evocative mood pieces that often up ate up large sections of the second side of a [Dire Straits](#) album, and that's hardly the only time either [Knopfler's](#) old band or his solo works are brought to mind here. Despite the few folk trappings, most of [Kill to Get Crimson](#) resembles nothing so much as another tastefully low-key album from [Knopfler](#), one that resides comfortably in his mellow Americana niche, where country, blues, and rock gently blend into a sound that resembles no particular style but evokes plenty of past sounds. [Knopfler](#) rides this soft groove as easily as he ever has, maybe even a little easier than usual, but the big difference here is although mood is key -- as it always is on a [Knopfler](#) solo album -- the emphasis is not on guitar; it's on the song. Thing is, the mood tends to trump the sound unless the album is heard closely, which is something [Knopfler's](#) dedicated cult will surely do, but less dedicated listeners can't be blamed if they enjoy this merely as background music if they choose to enjoy this at all.

The Origin of Love – Mika

Mika, in 2007 een instant superster met zijn debuutalbum, zette een stapje terug. Om nadien weer verder te springen? De man mag afgelopen zomer dan op het - naar zijn formaat - bescheiden Suikerrock hebben gestaan, en wisselt in november Sportpaleizen in voor het Koninklijk Circus, ook zijn derde album heeft troeven die de massa niet onberoerd zullen laten.

De vrij klassieke popsongs met vleugjes cabaret van zijn eerste albums maakt hier plaats voor een meer productiegestuurd geluid, met nogal wat elektronica en stemvorming. Je krijgt opnieuw mooie, openwaaierende pianoballades (Underwater), licht theatrale

popsongs (Populair Song haalt een sample uit musical Wicked) en flardjes eurodance (Overrated), terwijl in voor de hand liggende hits als Stardust en Celebrate het hoge stemmetje van de Libanees opnieuw naar voor wordt gehaald.

Mika mikt meer dan ooit op de benen, en niet alle tracks op dit album zijn het eeuwige leven beschoren. Maar wanneer de artiest deze liedjes straks op het podium wat meer vlees en bloed geeft, zijn een roedel nieuwe live-klassiekers geboren. Tot dan nodigen deze tracks uit tot veelvuldig remixen.



Monster – KISS



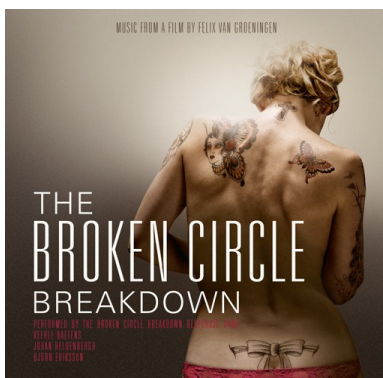
As Kiss approach 40 years of ridiculously dumb rock & roll fun, it makes sense that their 20th studio album, *Monster*, is more self-referential than anything. Following 2009's *Sonic Boom*, the album marks the second set of tunes by a revamped "original" Kiss lineup, with Paul Stanley and Gene Simmons joined by newbies Tommy Thayer and Eric Singer donning the makeup and personas originated by Ace Frehley and Peter Criss, respectively. Dressing up these random players in the classic comic book costumes is just step one in re-creating the feel of of Kiss' 1970s over the top heyday. *Monster* is a tremendous throwback to the superhuman partying and heavy metal Ragnarök of Kiss albums like *Destroyer* and *Love Gun*, with meaty riffs, hamfisted drumming, and a combination of Simmons' patented demonic growls and Stanley's interstellar party-starting, not to mention amounts of cowbell that would have been above average even in 1977. "All for the Love of Rock & Roll" is a big-hearted boogie rocker that would have fit on Frehley's stoney 1978 solo album, while the campily sinister metal riffage of "The Devil Is Me" and "Freak" fit more into the era of slick radio metal of 1992's *Revenge*. The muddy analog a cappella intro of "Eat Your Heart Out" sets the tone for tongue-in-cheek double entendres updating "Shout It Out Loud" with slightly different lyrics but the same bell-bottomed irreverence. It's only when Kiss stray from their most formulaic compositions that they start to falter. The remarkably dumb sex tale "Take Me Down Below" isn't just improbable macho fantasy, it's uninspired and boring. Musically, lyrically, and stylistically, it offers nothing, not even the joyful stupidity of the throwback feel of much of *Monster*. At this point in their career, attempts at innovation are Kiss' worst enemy. It's amazing to think that the bandmembers who once sang "My power is my age" and "Don't let them tell you that there's too much noise/They're too old to really understand" are still trotting out the same schtick as Paul and Gene enter their early sixties. These 12 songs might not score many new recruits for the Kiss Army, but for the innumerable fans of multiple generations who grew up with and lived their glory days listening to Kiss, the familiarity is what will make the record a keeper. With *Monster*, Kiss hit the mark best when rewriting the sound they developed as youngsters and when they keep it simple, predictable, and fun.

Mystic Pinball – John Hiatt

To his credit, John Hiatt has never been a guy with much interest in doing the same thing twice in a row, and it's not uncommon for a new Hiatt album to seem like a reaction to the last record he made -- a quiet, acoustic-based album will often be followed by a tougher, more rollicking set, and if he was thoughtful and introspective last time, it's a fair bet he'll sound tougher and wilder the next time he goes into the studio. Since 2011's *Dirty Jeans & Mudslide Hymns* boasted the slickest production to grace a Hiatt album in quite some time, it's paradoxically appropriate that *Mystic Pinball*, appearing just 13 months later, sounds a lot looser, funkier, and more lively, as if Hiatt and his band rolled in and cut these songs without much fuss. As it happens, *Dirty Jeans* and *Mystic Pinball* were both produced by the same guy, Kevin Shirley, but the finished product certainly sounds and feels different, and the rough and ready tone of these sessions fits the material well, especially the crunchy, blues-shot "My Business," the witty but ominous "Wood Chipper," the marvelously cranky "One of Them Damn Days," and the Stones-style groove of "You're All the Reason I Need." If the production is simple, Hiatt and his band -- Doug Lancio on guitar, Patrick O'Hearn on bass, and Kenneth Blevins on drums -- are locked in tight enough to sound sharp and satisfying without being gimmicked up, and there's a sense of fun in this album that was often missing on *Dirty Jeans*. And for a guy who has cranked out four studio albums in five years, Hiatt is having a great run as a songwriter -- on this disc, the shaggy dog stories are funny, the blues numbers are full of righteous swagger, and he can sing about love like a guy who is still learning a few things at the age of 60 (and his voice is in fine shape, too). Who knows what sort of about-face John Hiatt will deliver the next time he feels like recording (prog rock, maybe?), but for a guy whose 40th year as a solo artist is appearing on the horizon, he's sounding as full of ideas and energy as a guy half his age, and *Mystic Pinball* confirms he's still delivering the goods in an impressive fashion.



The Broken Circle Breakdown OST – The Broken Circle Breakdown Bluegrass Band



Veerle Baetens en Johan Heldenbergh brengen 12 prachtige country-klassiekers.

In de nieuwe film van **Felix van Groeningen**, speelt muziek een cruciale rol. In arrangementen van **Bjorn Ericksson**, zingen Veerle Baetens en Johan Heldenbergh klassiekers uit het country- & bluegrass-repertoire.

De sleutelsong 'Will the Circle be Unbroken' mocht uiteraard niet ontbreken, maar alle nummers van de soundtrack zullen jou diep ontroeren. Country en bluegrass moeten hier trouwens niet te eng geïnterpreteerd worden.

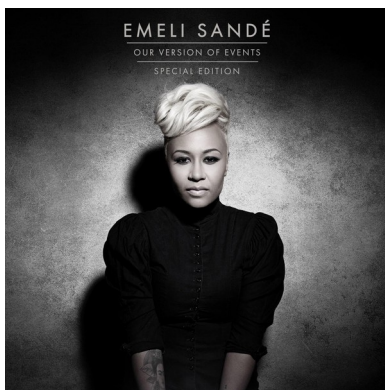
Zo staat ook de **Bruce Springsteen**-song 'Further up on the road', vooral bekend in de versie van **Johnny Cash**, op deze niet te missen cd. Johan Heldenbergh brengt er een minstens even doorleefde versie van.

North & South – Milow

While the laid-back beachside pop of his first two albums, *The Bigger Picture* and *Coming of Age*, didn't exactly indicate a potential European superstar, Belgian singer/songwriter Jonathan Vandebroek, aka Milow, has since become his homeland's biggest musical export since legendary chansonnier Jacques Brel, thanks to his clever 2008 cover version of 50 Cent's "Ayo Technology," which turned the Timbaland-produced sleazy hip-hop anthem into a surprisingly melancholic stripped-back ballad, topping the charts across six countries in the process. His first LP since its colossal success, *North & South* ignores any temptations to repeat the trick again, and instead focuses entirely on his accomplished songwriting skills, with 11 new self-penned compositions that attempt to prove to those only familiar with his signature hit that there's more to him than reworking the back catalog of American gangster rappers. With the exception of the few flourishes of electro on "Son" and the emotive Owl City-ish opening track (which deals with the grief he suffered over his father's recent death, a theme he also covers on the wistful "Building Bridges"), the follow-up to his eponymous third effort sticks rigidly to his trademark sun-kissed acoustic sound. Showcasing his slightly eccentric tendencies, lead single "You and Me (In My Pocket)" is a sweetly sung but deceptively twisted love song where Milow wishes his true love was "a little bigger, not just big, but really fat" and "a little slower, not just slow, but paralyzed" in a deranged outpouring of insecurities, while the Joshua Radin-esque "Rambo" is an altogether more innocent and humorous tale about reality quashing childhood dreams. But elsewhere, he plays it straight on the campfire singalong "More to Town," the folk-tinged pop of "Little in the Middle," an enchanting duet with regular backing vocalist Nina Babet, and "The Kingdom," where Milow convincingly plays the country troubadour while tackling the issue of political unrest in his native Belgium. The occasional touches of surreal humor aside, *North & South* could be an album from any one of José González, Jack Johnson, and Jason Mraz, but what it lacks in originality, it makes up for in good old-fashioned charm. It's unlikely to reach the same heady heights as its predecessor, but it's an effortlessly chilled summer soundtrack that ultimately shows he's far from just a one-hit wonder novelty act.



Our Version Of Events (Special Edition) – Emeli Sandé



In 2012, Brit's Critic Choice Award, a best new artist prize for the United Kingdom's best talent, unsurprisingly went to Emeli Sandé, a woman being lauded for her crystalline voice and her immaculate songwriting skills. By the time her debut album, *Our Version of Events*, hit shelves, Sandé had already been a number one-selling singer and songwriter, and had her work covered by names such as Tinchy Stryder, Alesha Dixon, and Susan Boyle. Many call the 24-year old starlet a jack-of-all-trades, and after listening to her first full-length debut, it's easy to understand why. *Events* skip from genre to genre breezily, often being carried by Sandé's piercing voice. Sonically, the album sounds like a whisked-blend of

Leona Lewis, Kate Bush, and Alicia Keys -- but, somehow, Sandé still establishes her own style between the airy coos, sultry piano melodies, and sprinkling of xylophones, synths, and bells. Sandé's strongest tracks are such a mixed-bag -- the Professor Green-spinoff "Read All About It (Part III)" is a raw interpretation of the massive pop single, "Lifetime" is a midtempo love song that's as engaging as a close listen as it is late at night, and the electrifying first single "Heaven" has all the makings of a vibrant dance record slicked up for the floor. A true feature of this album is the sheer quality of the compositions, which, for lack of a better term, are unexpectedly sophisticated and nuanced for a mainstream record. What holds the album back in parts is the fact that its tempo is too slow at times, however, Sandé makes up for it with passion and precision. *Our Version of Events* is an earnest collection of works by a woman who is as good a composer as she is vocalist, a lethal combination in today's pop music business. In this case, the Critic's Choice Award was well deserved.

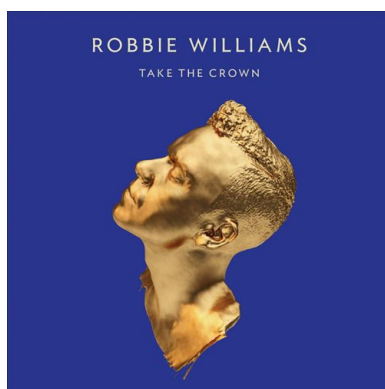
Merry Christmas, Baby (Deluxe Edition) – Rod Stewart

Hard as it may be to believe, but Rod Stewart has gotten through five decades without succumbing to a holiday album. That streak ends in 2012 with the release of *Merry Christmas, Baby*, an easygoing and chipper collection of secular seasonal standards. A couple of carols are thrown in for good measure but these songs -- "Silent Night," "We Three Kings" presented as a duet with Mary J. Blige -- along with a mildly incongruous "When You Wish Upon a Star," slide by easily on the mellow big-band swing of the rest of the record. Song for song, *Merry Christmas, Baby* is very much of a piece with Rod's ongoing *Great American Songbook* series, with Stewart



not straying from the familiar form of these songs and producer David Foster laying on all manner of soft, soothing sounds, whether it's acoustic guitars, synthesizers, strings, or a children's choir on "Silent Night." Very rarely does this hint at the Rod of the '70s -- and when it does on the closing "Auld Lang Syne," its intro given a spare folksy treatment reminiscent of his Mercury work, it's a bracing, effective reminder of Stewart's skill as a singer -- and instead relies on a gladhanding charm that suits the season, not to mention Stewart in his crooning dotage.

Take The Crown – Robbie Williams



Robbie Williams' self-described busman's holiday with *Take That* during 2010 may have put a hold on his solo career, but it also rejuvenated his creative instincts. When he returned to the studio without Barlow & co. (actually, Gary helped write and produce here), he decided to focus on what he does best: commercial pop music. This is pop music the way he used to create it in the '90s and 2000s, with songs either silly or serious, but always self-referential and knowing. On the surface, all of these songs could be middle-of-the-road hits, although most reveal lyrics that dig just a little deeper than chart fodder. This is a record capable of reaching both the

cheap seats and the fans screaming at the front, with big hooks, unmissable melodies, and Williams' by now trademarked brand of grandiose introspection and relationship examination. The trailer single "Candy" is a perfect example. A trite, uptempo track with a sing-song chorus but not much of a shelf life, it's the perfect radio hit. A few other songs are more interesting, including "Gospel" and the banner-waving ballad "Different," with tighter productions and more substantial lyrics. "Shit on the Radio" is an interesting detour, typically self-referential and self-disparaging and all the while rather gleeful about it, in a fashion that only Robbie Williams can risk and succeed with. It all sounds like the work that a member of Take That would be doing in 2012, without Williams' many hits of the past to draw on for setting expectations high. Take the Crown features Robbie doing what Robbie does best -- writing and performing effortless pop music -- but not at his best.