



BJÖRK
Vespertine Live at Royal Opera House 87%

Greatest Hits: Volumen 1993-2003 94%

Inside 81%
 One Little Indian



"Get Björked." That seems to be the game plan this year, with the typically shrouded singer poised to release a walloping seven DVDs—not to mention an additional box set of audio and video concert nuggets. For fans used to sipping a trickle of studio material once roughly every two years, it is, indeed, reason to celebrate. With her live appearances being equally blue-moon affairs, three of the sets (*Vespertine Live*, *Vessel* and *Later with Jools Holland*) are a blessing to those who don't live near a local opera house or U.K. TV studio. The others (*Greatest Hits*, *Volumen Plus*, *Minuscule*, *Inside*) are a hodge-podge of career-view video and documentary material geared more toward the diehard fanatic. A-Ha and Tool aside, Miss

Gudmundsdóttir's cinematic endeavors are virtually unparalleled—and she's got Spike Jonze, Michel Gondry and other innovative directors to thank for that. Speaking of which, it seems that, oddly enough, each of the three DVDs in discussion are defined more by the third parties than they are by Björk the individual...in effect taking the wind out of the entire campaign, or so it would seem. There's the *Royal Opera House* volume—a curious release concept in and of itself, considering her penchant for precious, interpersonal performances—stuffed with a 56-piece orchestra, a backing choir and recent collaborative pair Matmos. And then we have *Inside*, which would be perceived as a long-awaited peek into the artist's closely guarded personal life were it not offset by interview clips featuring RZA, Missy Elliott, Sean Penn and others. For an artist with a reputation for being succinct, this long-winded batch of releases plays up the other aspect of her character—the flightily, mysterious side. Believe it or not, the *Royal Opera House* disc actually previews segments from yet another impending package—*Touring Vespertine*—signaling that this bizarre, unfocused series has lots in store.

KURT ORZECK



BT
Emotional Technology 83%
 Nettwerk

The press release tells me that BT's new album features Rose McGowan of TV's smash hit *Charmed*. I wish I could let the press release know that RM matters as much to me, or the average listener, as the color of Oprah's thong. On the other hand, the album notes tell me that Way Out West's Jody Wisternoff is a collaborator and hell, I'd buy a Betty Crocker Easy Bake Oven if he told me to. BT has long been a champion of bridging the gap between trance/progressive and pop music. Although often sweeping and melodramatic a la Sarah McLachlan, if you're looking for a gateway album into the electronic community this is a fine place to start. As an engineer, BT is a wild staghound of technical innovation. Professors from MIT and Doctors from various international think tanks concerned with the nature of sound as a weapon of mass destruction regularly tour his studio. Love it or loathe it, *ET* streaks the gauntlet from breaks to hip-hop to trance and downtempo with seamless, soothing fluidity.

MARK VON PFEIFFER



THE THRILLS
So Much For The City 86%
 Virgin Records

You are a mean spirited, coldhearted bastard if you don't fall in love with the Thrills. Their sunkissed debut, *So Much For The City*, is a modern day West Coast classic that combines the most fetching elements of the Beach Boys, the Byrds, Burt Bacharach and latter day Neil Young. From the opening notes of "Santa Cruz (You're Not That Far)" to the lingering strains of the epic closer, "Til The Tide Creeps In," you'll find yourself lost in a dazzlingly endless summer. But don't let yourself think that this is merely a *Greatest Hits from the Golden State* rehash. When lead singer Conor Deasy laments "It's such a shame when old friends fall out" on "Old Friends, New Lovers," the strings swoon plaintively and the piano chimes in with just the right amount of somberness. Moments like this one make you realize that the Thrills bring their own heartfelt poignancy to this balmy tribute to their heroes.

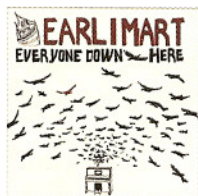
NEVIN MARTELL



THE JOGGERS
Solid Guild 90%
 Star Time

A sloppy, scrappy outfit from Portland who play pop music the way some people fall down the stairs, with a certain accidental grace. Rhythms pinball back and forth, galloping down a pathway littered with guitars that try to jab you in the eyes. It's odd then, that the harmonies come together in such pleasant, non-violent manner. It's controlled chaos that is too spastic to be a fixed part in any neo-romantic New York guitar revival, but there is too much melody for it to find a home with any panic-stricken noise rock fan from Rhode Island. If you are old enough to remember Polvo's mathematical manifestos where pop, punk and logic seemed to jump off of the graph paper and begin dancing the St. Vitus Dance, then you might have an idea of the sort of strangulated, pop strangeness found in the music of the Joggers. The fact that the cover of the album is a straight knockoff of Buffalo Springfield's second album make the proceedings all the more strange.

JON PRUETT



EARLIMART
Everyone Down Here 83%
 PALM

The first time I ever saw Earlimart, they opened for Granddaddy and Elliott Smith, and I'm still trying to figure out why they threw themselves to the wolves like that. It's dangerous as hell to play with the two artists which are your most obvious comparisons. Listen to the whispered vocals on "Hospital," and you'll swear you're hearing Smith's hushed voice fronting the instrumental buzz fuzz of Granddaddy. But listen to the album again. And again. The songs themselves are catchy, lush, and well-constructed enough that if either Smith or Granddaddy released them, you would not only like them, but rave that it's some of the best work either has ever done. Take the quiet, mid-tempo acoustic beauty of "Dreaming Of..." Earlimart pulls it off so well you'll understand exactly why they welcome the challenge to play alongside such indie heavyweights. Not only can Earlimart hang with the big boys, but they have raised the bar.

STEVE LECKART