



**X-ecutioners**

*Built From Scratch* (Loud Records)

Following the release of *X-Pressions* in 1997, the quartet of New York turntablists the X-ecutioners pulled a J.D. Salinger on the hip-hop fans who found nirvana in their scratches and mixological wizardry. Four years later, the team drops *Built From Scratch* on which guest MCs ranging from the late Big Pun to Xzibit to Everlast throw down crisp, aggressive rhymes over the X-ecutioners' refined breakbeat magic. Inspired collaborations with Linkin Park and Tom Tom Club reveal a willingness to find bridges to pop music from the storied lexicon of hip hop. **Andrew Strickman**

**Vermont**

*Calling Albany* (Kindercore Records)

The toned-down triumvirate featuring members from The Promise Ring and Pele, Vermont is indeed a sonic paradigm of that state—strikingly subdued yet verdant with sparkling landscapes. The trio's second release, *Calling Albany*, is a synthesis of sand-scratched vocals, languorous guitars, and windy-road arrangements paved around cheeky song titles like "Arrest Harrison Ford!" and "The Ballad of Larry Bird." As the antithesis of their more familiar punk-charged sounds, *Calling Albany* is perfect for those wanting quiet time without silence. **Mar Yvette**

**Super Furry Animals**

*Rings Around The World*

On sixth album *Rings Around the World*, Wales' Super Furry Animals have traded some of the intergalactic nuttiness that characterized their folksy, wraparound prog-rock over five prior albums in favor of a bigger, slicker, less byzantine sound. Some of the irreverence heard on *Radiator* and *Guerrilla* has been lost in the bargain, which may chagrin obstinate long-time fans. But the Furries' sense of fun and irrepressibly rich melodies remain, making dazzlers like "Sidwalk Surfer Girl" and "Run Christian Run" irresistible to all but the grinchiest. **Maya Singer**

**The Church**

*After Everything Now This* (Thirsty Ear)

Oddly embraced by everyone from goth kids to housewives by the late-'80s, The Church took the usual nosedive from mega-success when a hip-hop nation made it tragically inconvenient to be an anglo-psychedelic band. Wonderfully, though, this new record makes no play for the zeitgeist. Instead, the Church re-explore the spookiest, most somber recesses of their psychedelic proclivities, oddly sounding more like old Echo & The Bunnymen than Echo do themselves now. Jangly guitars are eschewed in favor of cavernous, preternatural atmospherics and edgy melodies. A full-on revelation. **Ken Scudato**

**Eels**

*Souljacker* (DreamWorks)

If the Doors were iconic rock and U2 is heroic rock, then Eels could be called sardonic rock. You might remember their winking '90s hit "Novocaine for the Soul." Or, you might be one of the growing legions of new Eels fans who falsely credit quirk as genius. If you're of the latter, then you'll revel in the irony found in "World of Shit" or "Dog Faced Boy," and you won't even notice that they follow their own advice on "That's Not Really Funny." **Gregg LaGambina**

**Christopher Lawrence**

*Around the World* (Moonshine)

Christopher Lawrence is one of the only Americans among the alpha wolf pack of international trance DJs. His latest mix: *Around the World*, is an oscillating thunderball that ignores the highs, hammers the mids, and pounds the lows with intestine-rattling precision. Of particular note are Lawrence's remix of Mile High's "Night Fever" and Auerbach's "Muke." Screw Gatorade. If snowboarding, mountain biking, or trekking across Antarctica on a dogsled, *Around the World* will give you all the energy you need. Tally ho. **Mark VonPfeiffer**