

something akin to a room in a cabin in the dusted, deserted nowhere where two weary lovers stare into each other's eyes, arguing back and forth and caught in some musical spaghetti western. And these are bitter arguments, expelling icy truth with two flawed schmucks tearing each other down limb by lips by hair by heart—only to put one another back together again. And you know it'll all only come crumbling back down, but that's OK. They're resigned to it. You're resigned to it. So, what's left now but to hum along, smile and wait for Armageddon? **DANNY FASOLD**

THE ORB
The Dream

90%



SIX DEGREES

First off, and I say this in the strictest liturgical sense, there are very few bands in any wing of music-dom that make it two decades. 2008 signals the 20th anniversary of The Orb's first single, "Tripping on Sunshine"; however, lexicon-wise it's "Little Fluffy Clouds" which is the hermetically sealed brain-palsier that allowed them to crack the U.K. charts and become co-pioneers of ambient house music. What we are talking about here is slowed-down house and experimental noise production—"real" instruments are allowed to participate only in the strictest collusion with filters, loops and voltaic digital effects. On this LP, not much has changed. It is not a sign of senescence that the beats-per-minute don't often rise above a resting heartbeat; The Orb, although they can certainly fulminate any dancefloor in any dimension on a whim, have always been the ruling bon vivants of electronic psychedelia. Slow and surreal is their canter, simultaneously calming and disturbing the endocrine system; samples of BBC reporters, obscure movies, astronauts and organisms both real and imaginary pervade. *The Dream* is neither an earth-sundering breakthrough nor any type of quietus. The former is unnecessary, as remaining founder Dr. Alex Paterson and his henchmen have already invented their own ultra-world, and it is highly unlikely that the latter will ever come to pass. I am certain that when Paterson dies, his body will be launched into space in a

specially designed rocket tube outfitted from bow to stern in indestructible, atomically powered speakers designed by NASA. For now, via tracks like "High Noon" and "Mother Nature," they continue to ride high in the saddle on much the same sine waves they engineered in the previous millennium. **MARKUS von PFEIFFER**

GREG LASWELL
Three Flights from Alto Nido

89%



VANGUARD

After two releases of plateaued bitter-pop, San Diego's diamond in the rough has matured into making music that is wearing thin the chip on his shoulder. *Three Flights from Alto Nido* relies upon the familiar eighth-note patterns of Britain's resounding influence on today's music scene, but unlike Laswell's former releases, this one's beat matches the fluttering of his love-tired heart with the chance for a happy ending. Flashes of optimism surface in "Comes and Goes (In Waves)" with an uncommon easiness alongside the acceptance of love-loss, where each melodic line seems to suggest the next before it arrives. "Days Go On" offers more of what has become traditional to Laswell's emotionally charged climaxes, employing a circulating, baroque-fueled piano theme for rhythmic flare. *Three Flights from Alto Nido* not only reaffirms Laswell's talents as the tunesmith that's conquered the dramatics of the television soundtrack, but that he's still best served with a side of resentment. **MATT ELDER**

THE JEALOUS GIRLFRIENDS
Good Fences

83%



LAST GANG

Yes, there are a variety of bands in the female-fronted/shoegaze-y/'60s literate vein (The Duke Spirit, Experimental Aircraft, Soundpool, etc.), but The Jealous Girlfriends seem to take them to town. It's a matter of range. If you like guitar pedal expertise, 85 percent-annoying synth, weird sunshine sing-song na-na's ("The Pink Wig to My

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