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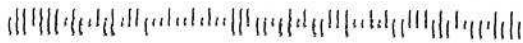
# MUMFORD & SONS

## GENTLEMEN

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puts the gossip to rest, for the moment at least, with a raw knuckle sandwich of marauding rock—studio banter, count-offs, warts and all—that pretty much wipes the floor with anything that the band has done to date. There are flashes of Police-like slickness (“Day Four”) and the artfully layered guitar textures the lads used to explore with producer **Jackknife Lee** (the Philip K. Dick tribute “V.A.L.I.S.”), but for the most part, *FOUR* bristles with the hard, spontaneous energy of four guys cutting loose in the studio. If a groove-banger like “Real Talk” (channeling *Low*-era Bowie) is any sign, then they’ve still got plenty of fight left in them. **Bill Murphy**

## Tift Merritt

Traveling Alone YEP ROC

Houston-born **Tift Merritt** basically reviews her own record on *Traveling Alone*'s second track: “Nothing fancy, nothing fake. Nothing wasted and no deal to make.” She couldn’t have written it better—on her fourth studio album since 2002’s breakthrough debut *Bramble Rose*, Merritt wears her influences unabashedly on her sleeves (Joni Mitchell, Emmylou Harris), writes from the heart and sings in a tone clearer than glass. The sum total is simple, straightforward and perfectly effective, country-leaning folk. The killer here is “Drifted Apart,” a duet with **Andrew Bird**, whose fluttering vocals wrap around Merritt’s like ivy crawling up a brick wall. The record’s front half is arrestingly gorgeous and its back half is just as pretty. It’s hard to complain about such simple, comforting pleasures. **Justin Jacobs**

## Tom Tom Club

Downtown Rockers EP NACIONAL

**Chris Frantz** and **Tina Weymouth** have quietly kept truckin’ through semi-obscurity ever since “Genius of Love,” their solitary mega-dance-pop smash from 1981. On the *Downtown Rockers* EP, they don’t screw with the formula—bright, tropical rhythms, repetitive grooves, cartoonish hooks—even though the novelty wears thin. The opening title track is sub-B-52s schlock, with Frantz speak-singing the names of various CBGB greats (in his lamest Fred Schneider impression) over a bluesy guitar strut. Things perk up—briefly—with “Won’t Give You Up,” a *Speaking In Tongues*-styled jam with psych-funk keys and a trademark groove from one of the world’s sturdiest rhythm sections. But in spite of the duo’s timeless instrumental finesse, most of these songs are sadly stale. **Ryan Reed**

## DVDS

### Todd Rundgren

Todd S/MORE/ROCKBEAT



You’ve gotta be just a little bit nuts to be **Todd Rundgren**. After all, anyone who would follow a sprawling art rock masterpiece like

1972’s *Something/Anything?* with a trilogy of uneven, navel-gazing experiments in synth-prog schlock must have a screw loose, right? Well that, as we know, was then. Rundgren’s mid-’70s output has since withstood the raft of early criticism. His double LP *Todd* in particular, with such ecstatic curveballs as the proto-punk “Heavy Metal Kids” and the acid-pop drum machine ditty “A Dream Goes on Forever,” has influenced everyone from Patti Smith to Daft Punk. So when Rundgren decided, more than 35 years later, to launch a short tour to perform the album in its entirety, the idea sounded far-out, and yet somehow fitting. With a band made up largely of players from the short-lived experiment *The New Cars* (featuring *The Cars*’ original keyboardist **Greg Hawkes**), Rundgren gamely goes for the high notes that he hit at age 25, and still shreds a guitar with authority. Even so, enthusiasm sans youthful mojo can only take you so far. The real diamond here is the DVD’s in-depth interview, where an

unguarded Rundgren holds forth with wit, humor, sarcasm—and yes, just a hint of insanity. **Bill Murphy**

### Jimi Hendrix

Jimi Plays Berkeley LEGACY



An upgrade of the part-documentary/part-concert film first released in 1971, this new DVD/Blu-Ray adds about 15 minutes of recently

discovered footage from the 1970 Memorial Day concerts that comprised the original release. That still amounts to a film that’s only 70 minutes long, and a chunk of that is extraneous: protesters, hippie-on-the-street interviews, pre-concert doings and other ephemera. Still, despite its flaws (the grainy film quality isn’t much improved), *Jimi Plays Berkeley* contains just enough superb performance footage—**Jimi Hendrix** accompanied by bassist **Billy Cox** and returning Experience drummer **Mitch Mitchell**—to make it a worthy piece of the Hendrix video library. Only months away from his death, Hendrix and the band are in ripping form on classics like “Machine Gun,” “Foxy Lady” and “Johnny B. Goode.” The complete second set is included on a bonus disc in superior audio; the music has also been released separately for those who’ve already seen the film. **Jeff Tamarkin**

## Branford Marsalis Quartet

Four MFs Playin’ Tunes

MARSALIS MUSIC



When preparing for their new album, the **Branford Marsalis Quartet**—with recently recruited drummer

**Justin Faulkner** making his recorded debut with the band (the others are bassist **Eric Revis** and pianist **Joey Calderazzo**)—decided to focus not so much on the in-your-face virtuosity that’s always been incontestable, but on song structures. Some might argue that, for all of its dexterity, this band has always known its way around a lyrical melody, but rarely did one come away from a **Branford Marsalis** set humming. That’s doable here: From the opener, “The Mighty Sword,” which showcases the leader playfully navigating his soprano saxophone, to the ebullient take on *The Lonesome Monk*’s “Teo” and on through the easygoing, shuffling “Treat It Gentle,” *Four MFs Playin’ Tunes* takes its title to heart. **Jeff Tamarkin**

## JEFF the Brotherhood

Hypnotic Nights

INFINITY CAT/WARNER BROTHERS



Rules of rockcrit sport dictate that whenever a band known for, let’s say, *limited* chops suddenly hits a seam

of genius, the proper descriptive metaphor should involve monkeys, typewriters and Shakespeare. Nashville, Tenn., natives **Jake** and **Jamin Orrall** have been bashing out scuzzy basement rock since 2002, and while they’ve amassed a decent repertoire of punk-fueled riffs and cheeky lyrics, *Hypnotic Nights* kicks it up several notches. Recorded with **Dan Auerbach**, the music breathes with a sense of dynamics that eluded last year’s *We Are the Champions*, and the songs themselves—the Stooges-worthy “Staring at the Wall” or the psych-sludge vamp “Mystic Portal II,” for example—sear into memory like the summer you first learned how to skateboard. If the Bard of Avon were a garage rocker, he’d have made this

one a hero’s tale with a frothy dram of comedy-romance. **Bill Murphy**

## Scrapomatic

I’m a Stranger and I Love the Night

LANDSLIDE



Throughout its history, blues rock has been rigidly defined by established conventions and forms, giving it an instantly recognizable sound and feel. **Scrapomatic**—Tedeschi Trucks Band singer **Mike Mattison**’s other project—follows these established patterns closely on their fourth album, but they also occasionally deviate from the formula for some charming, heartfelt moments. Their more muscular, heavy-hitting songs offer few surprises, but the group’s musical dexterity and songwriting experience shine in the album’s more intimate numbers, especially the French café, pop-inspired “How Unfortunate for Me” and the soulful “I Surrender.” While **Paul Olsen** adds some interesting guitar riffs, the album really revolves around Mattison’s nuanced vocals, as his subtle rasp lends evocative grit to the lyrics and channels the timeless timbres of blues history. **Jack McManus**

## Black Moth Super Rainbow

Cobra Juicy RAD CULT



It’s easy to get wrapped up in the mystery of **Black Moth Super Rainbow**. **Tom Fec**, aka **Tobacco**, is the

collective’s mastermind, a relative recluse from Pittsburgh, Pa., who creates shoegazing, synth-drenched, heavily psychedelic pop with vocals so distorted that it’s hard to tell if he’s male or female. He also tends to wear a mask. But under all the weirdness, BMSR’s latest, *Cobra Juicy*, is simply a catchy indie pop record—his most accessible to date. The group’s faithful fans might decry that statement, but it’s a compliment. *Cobra Juicy* links BMSR’s slippery, reverb soundscapes with percussion that really punches. First single “Windshield Smasher” is a banger with a demented cheerleader beat. This is twinkling, crystalline music for a chemically enhanced, underwater dance club. **Justin Jacobs**

## Woods

Bend Beyond woodstist



As the head of Woodstist records, **Woods** mastermind **Jeremy Earl** helped launch Kurt Vile, Vivian Girls,

Real Estate, Waves and a slew of other basement psych-punks into the indie hype machine. Seven albums deep, Earl’s decided it’s time that the masses discovered his band, too.