

ALBUM REVIEWS

Tiles

Pretending to Run

Laser's Edge

Producer: Terry Brown

Detroit-based prog-rock quartet Tiles have never shied away from musically ambitious and epic projects and compositions. Over their 20-plus year career they've released a catalog of live and studio works that have garnered the praise of everyone from Gene Simmons of KISS to Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson. But, with their first album for Laser's Edge, they've upped the ante by giving the listener a double disc with an engaging storyline, meticulously arranged string and choral pieces, sweet vocal harmonies and tuneful jam-based rock, fusion and world beat sounds. Also there is an impressive guest list to round out the festivities. — **Eric A. Harabadian**



Parquet Courts

Human Performance

Rough Trade Records

Producer: Parquet Courts

The new *Human Performance* LP offers up some immediately galvanizing guitar-based rock & roll. The vocals are often reminiscent of Jonathan Richman's, whose first *Modern Lovers* LP was a protopunk classic with strong Velvet Underground sensibilities. Parquet Courts continue this legacy of compelling music, and perhaps they've absorbed some Beck, Wire and Sonic Youth. Whatever the case, this might be one of the best records you've heard in a while. Listen to these guys offer up inspired humor ("Dust"), a great guitar jam (see "One Man, No City") and even get beautiful ("Steady On My Mind"). Listen now! — **David Arnson**



No Malice

Movin' Weight (A Story from the Streets)

Second Music

Producer: Various

Once a contributor to "dope boy" rap music, No Malice fka Malicious/Malice has released a soundtrack to a documentary on his life as a drug dealer struggling with the complexities of fame, fortune, family and friends and how he transcended it through Jesus Christ. This release is concise and pulsing. Songs like "Best Believe" where No Malice aims to inspire others to become people of value despite adversity. *Movin' Weight* lets listeners know that there is a God in Heaven who loves them and if they are tired of carrying the weight of the world on their shoulders, then they can cast their burdens onto the Lord; thus *Movin' Weight*. — **Adam Seyum**



Michael Lington

Second Nature

Copenhagen Music

Producer: Barry Eastmond

Contemporary Urban Jazz goes full-on STAX yet again, as one of the genre's most soul-fired and muscular alto sax players expands on the high octane, old-school energy exploration of his Memphis influences he started with Barry Eastmond on his previous set *Soul Appeal*. With the lone cover, a feisty, horn and organ drenched jam on "Soul Finger" leading the way, Lington embarks on a grooving burst of originals with a retro-modern sensibility. He surrounds his towering horn leads with bright, irrepressible bass lines, crisp guitar licks, stomping grooves and gospel touches, courtesy of an all-star cast including Booker T. — **Jonathan Widran**



Dario Chiazzolino

Red Cloud

Tukool Records

Producer: Tukool Records

Since his emergence in the late 2000s, critically acclaimed Italian-born guitar virtuoso Dario Chiazzolino has worked with many legendary jazz figures, including The Yellowjackets, Billy Cobham and Andy Sheppard. Inspired by an orchestral approach to jazz fusion, his latest offers colorful melodies and harmonies, crisp and impossibly dazzling electric lines and improvisation and explosive interaction with pianist Antonio Farao, drummer Manhu Roche and bassist Dominique Di Piazza. Chiazzolino balances the spirited frenzy of a mostly original set (he includes Miles Davis' "Solar") with the warm acoustic ballad "Starry." — **Jonathan Widran**



Darrell Scott

Couchville Sessions

Full Light/Thirty Tigers

Producer: Darrell Scott

Legendary Nashville singer/songwriter Darrell Scott returns with his first solo album in four years. And on his latest, his emotionally vibrant vocals matched with tasty musicianship and sharp, witty lyricism, have lost none of their charm and impact. Along with Scott's original songwriting he's also included material by artists that influenced him, such as James Taylor, Hank Williams, Townes Van Zandt and Johnny Cash. The 14 songs naturally cover a wide cross-section of personal themes, like the demise of relationships in "Time to Go Away" and the humorous and lighthearted "Loretta." This is a master storyteller in his element. — **Eric A. Harabadian**



Andrew Bird

Are You Serious

Loma Vista Recordings

Producer: Tony Berg

The former Squirrel Nut Zippers violinist gets more personal than ever before, exploiting windswept lyrics bound by dramatic instrumentation to sizable effect. Guest appearances by Fiona Apple and Blake Mills spice up the proceedings while Bird maintains a somber beauty throughout. Single "Capsized" elicits smiles, but there's plenty elsewhere that will generate waves of cathartic melancholy. Generous doses of contemplative, non-ironic listening will reveal a sophisticated delicacy, as the multi-instrumentalist's twisting compositions consistently unfold with the gentility of a lotus flower submerged in hot tea. — **Andy Kaufmann**



Rachel Sage

Choreographic

MPress Records

Producer: Rachel Sage, Andy Zulla

Concept albums can be tricky. The artist must impart her vision to the listener without the requisite backstory. Inspired by her years as a student with The American Ballet Theater, Sage, on her 13th album, attempts to marry her love of music and dance. "Heaven Is A Grocery Store" kicks off the theme nicely with a *River Dance* feel and several tracks with a waltz feel. Ultimately, though, as the CD unfolds, the concept weakens and what remains is a collection of respectable, diverse songs and treatments. When you get down to it, most of these songs provide a musical landscape that one can choreograph. — **Ellen Woloshin**



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