



This week: releases by Scissor Sisters, M83 and Stiff Little Fingers

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THE GAMECOCK

SCISSOR SISTERS – “SCISSOR SISTERS” (POLYDOR)

The debut album from New York’s Scissor Sisters really ought to come with a warning label that reads, “Those allergic to ’70s white polyester kitsch and glitzy pop ballads should not consume the contents herein.” Putting this into your CD player is akin to finding a disco-ball-shaped time capsule that, upon being opened, emits a shower of magical Technicolor rays which give birth to the only

five genie-like beings that are capable of creating such a putridly retro yet undeniably appealing album. Dance floor gems like “Tits on the Radio” and the reworking of Pink Floyd’s “Comfortably



Numb” exude a definite Bee Gee-esque quality, especially in the falsetto vocals.

“Take Your Mama” is the best song George Michael never wrote,

a smash hit in the UK that is the perfect soundtrack to any wonderfully decadent evening. Not hopelessly upbeat however, the Sisters are also capable of switching up the tempo with soaring piano pop ballads that give a wink and sly grin to Elton John’s best work. The cheesy aliases the band members take on simply put a tacky red maraschino cherry on the top of this double-fudge sundae of an album.

M83 – “DEAD CITIES, RED SEAS, AND LOST GHOSTS” (MUTE)

“Dead Cities, Red Seas, and Lost Ghosts” is, quite simply put, the album William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau would make if they were 21st century electronic musicians. The album cover, which depicts four hikers laying flat on their backs in awe-inspiring winter landscape, gives M83’s initial nod to the natural world. But what is truly stirring is how this French group communicates unabashed natural beauty through sound. Layers of synthesizer wash over the listener like a mystical mountain



stream bursting with color, icy blues, sparkling yellows, and soothing reds.

Like My Bloody Valentine’s classic album “Loveless,” “Dead Cities” is meticulously constructed so with every listen some beautiful new aspect reveals itself. This album is best experienced in the cozy sonic nest created by good headphones and, like nature or life itself, appreciating the little things on display will provide a grander, ultimately more fulfilling picture.

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS – “GUITAR & DRUM” (KUNG-FU)

“Is this the new Green Day?” If you are a fan of “High Fidelity,” a film that is required viewing for any self-respecting indie music fan, you might remember the scene where a young, curious punk customer is buying the new Green Day album and the ever-perceptive record store clerk throws on a Stiff

Little Fingers record. The influence of this Belfast band is often criminally overlooked, especially considering they were contemporaries of pioneering melodic punk-minded groups like the Clash and the Buzzcocks. On this album’s stand-out track, “Strummerville,” SLF founder Jake Burns pays his respects to his close friend, the Clash’s dearly departed Joe Strummer. Most of the songs pack a powerful pop punch, and the lyrical content displays optimism tempered by years of viewing the world through a cautious punk lens. “Guitar & Drum” celebrates the band’s 25th anniversary by showcasing the trademark Stiff Little Fingers sound while incorporating mature elements that see the band aging gracefully.



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had the names of celebrities who had stayed there. One woman had Gene Hackman. I had some lame Arizona congressman.

I saw the Grand Canyon. There should be a law requiring all living organisms to see it. ‘Nuff said.

Some time later that day, I “stood on a corner in Winslow, Ariz.,” in the tradition of the famed Eagles song “Take It Easy.” On that very corner stood a bronze statue of the song’s co-writer, Jackson Browne. I guess some small towns have to take what they can get. Unfortunately, a “girl in a flat-bed Ford” didn’t “slow down to take a look at me.” It was more like “a guy in a death-trap Pinto speeding up to get away from me.”

After a \$125 speeding ticket outside Amarillo, Texas, I was back to my favorite place: Oklahoma. I hunkered down outside OKC for the night and drove back into the city for one more glimpse of the

memorial. Seeing the place lit up at night was worth every plastic surgeon that cut me off in California.

My last distinct memory comes from somewhere in Oklahoma the next day, where the fields of grain moved like ocean waves in the wind. I stood outside my car and tried to feel everything. I can only describe it as painfully beautiful, like a girl so simply gorgeous that the mere sight of her makes you ache in an indescribable way.

After more Arkansas rain and more Tennessee boredom, I got home Wednesday, May 19. It was bizarre getting an oil change just one week after my last one, but 5,000 miles is 5,000 miles. More than a month later, I’m concentrating on school, my band, and the newspaper, and the urgent voice telling me to take the trip is gone. It’s replaced with reflection, understanding ... and the sound of screeching tires in California.

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