

Alt-Nation: The Best of The Best

The last column of the year for music journalists is typically reserved for “Best of” lists, or so says my inbox, which is flooded with suggestions from various publicists. Anyways, here is a bunch of “Best of” from the 2016, including national records, local records and best bets to ring in the New Year.

I’d like to apologize to Kanye West for omitting Beyonce’s *Lemonade*. I just wanted to see one “Best of” list without that album and it seems like this was the only way to make that happen, in this, the most prestigious list in the nation. Here’s to happy holidays and a new year filled with all the best.

Best New Records of 2016

10) Angel Olson - *My Woman*

9) PJ Harvey - *The Hope Six Demolition Project*

8) David Bowie - *Blackstar*

7) Ty Segall - *Emotional Mugging*

6) Peter Wolf - *A Cure for Loneliness*

5) Bob Mould - *Patch the Sky* (Merge Records) - The third in a series of Mould’s return to form fronting a power trio is more reflective. Mould and band still can out-rock the youngsters with hook-fueled anthems like “The End of Things” and “Lucifer and God.” It may not be *Flip Your Wig* part two, but it is close.

4) Eric Bachmann - Self-titled (Merge Records) - The former Archers of Loaf front man abandons indie rock for a heaping helping of modern singer-songwriter gold. “Mercy” sounds like the Ronettes fronted by Warren Zevon. My favorite cut here is “Modern Drugs,” which starts with just a piano before building to a harmony-rich crescendo.

3) Iggy Pop - *Post Pop Depression* - This collaboration with Josh Homme (Queens of the Stone Age) reinvigorated Iggy Pop musically after the last mediocre Stooges record. This album harkens back to Iggy’s Berlin Trilogy with Bowie with the understandable Queens of the Stone Age slant. Iggy’s baritone vocals croon on tunes like “Break into Your Heart” and retain his signature bite on “In the Lobby.” The introspective “Chocolate Drops” and the fed-up-with-everything “Paraguay” are my favorites.

2) Shovels & Rope - *Little Seeds* (New West Records) - On *Little Seeds*, their most diverse record, this husband/wife duo has never been louder and more intimate. From the frantic stomp of “Botched Execution” to the celebratory “This Ride,” Shovels & Rope have never been more raw and tender. The soaring “Last Hawk” gives one the feeling of lying on a porch in the south looking up at the stars.

1) D Generation - *Nothing is Anywhere* - There is no rust on D Generation’s first album in 17 years, which picks up in the post-millennium apocalypse where their last record, *Through the Darkness*, left off. The post-glam rock meets punk rock strut comes across as a dark take on ’70s Cheap Trick. From the post-hardcore of “Militant” to the early Alice Cooper meets T Rex swagger of “21st Century Blues,”

Nothing is Anywhere is worth the wait.

Best Local Albums

- 6) The Z-Boys - Self-titled - A mostly instrumental surf swing with a touch of soul to dance the manta ray to in your room.
- 5) Atlantic Thrills - *Vices* (Almost Ready Records) - Another truckload of surf garage rock to howl at the moon to at a mid-summer beach party.
- 4) Jets Can't Land - *You Can't Linger On* (75OrLess Records) - Indie guitar swing at its finest, complete with all the bells and whistles. Jets Can't Land even accomplished this without using any bells or whistles.
- 3) The Low Anthem - *Eyeland* - On their first release in five years, The Low Anthem touch on everything from ambient sounds to dreamy takes on garage rock in their most diverse offering to-date.
- 2) The Silks - *Turn Me On* - The Silks drops the boot on another bluesy testimonial to a love affair with rock 'n' roll.
- 1) Tall Teenagers - Self-titled - Tall Teenagers' debut is an homage to indie rock in the vein of *Surfa Rosa* Pixies. The tension in Damian Puerini's and Chelsea Paulhus' vocals makes me probably like this record better than the 2017 Pixies album.

5 Best Shows to Rock in the New Year

- 5) Turkuaz with Moon Hooch, Kung Foo, and West End Blend at Fete Music Hall on December 30 and 31.

The "powerfunk" Turkuaz comes to Fete for a two-night party celebrating that 2016 is finally over. Turkuaz churn R&B, pop and soul into their funk-a-tron machine, creating the perfect sound to dance the night away.

- 4) The Silks and Cactus Attack at The Met Café on December 30.

The Silks were in the last column, but since then they won a Boston Music Award for "Best Blues Band," which is a real accomplishment for a Providence band. This show is a real hometown throwdown of '70s blues boogie rock.

- 3) Julie Rhodes, Arc Iris, She Keeps Bees, and Last Good Tooth at the Columbus Theatre on December 31.

If you haven't caught Julie Rhodes yet, you are missing a modern-day Janis Joplin. When it comes to having pipes, Rhodes is a powerhouse. Rhode's new album, *Bound to Meet the Devil*, and Arc Iris' dreamy *Moon Saloon* are excellent gifts for the music lovers on your lists.

- 2) Gogol Bordello presents Da Da Western at Lupo's Heartbreak Hotel on December 30.

I don't know Da Da Western, but Gogol Bordello is one of the most electrifying live bands on the planet. The original gypsy punks have never failed to put on a show that stimulates, and their message is

needed more than ever.

1) Murphy's Law / Midnight Creeps reunion at Firehouse 13 on December 31.

I talked about Murphy's Law last issue, so the focus here is on the reunion of the Midnight Creeps for their first show in several years. Midnight Creeps were a female front punk rock warhorse that started in the vein of The Cramps meets The Stooges at a tribute show to The Plasmatics. In their later years, after some personnel changes on drums and guitar, a touch of Motley Crue worked its way into the Creeps' sound. I have a long, twisted history with this band, but that said, it is good to hear Jenny Hurricane and the band are back to give 2016 the black eye that it deserves.

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