

# Season Two of the Rock 'n' Roll Apocalypse: The light in the darkness

As spring rolls around in the underground, glimmers of hope abound with vaccines, warmer weather and the gradual return of live music! On the negative is the return of mass shootings, but that is another conversation for another place between people who don't listen to each other. One of the bright spots of the pandemic is a ton of people have spent it making music! I'm way behind on reviews, so let's see how many I get through — more to come at a time and place that is uncertain.

## **Jodie Treloar Sampson — *I Thought I Was Dead, but I Was Really Alive* (75orLess Records)**

The second EP from Jodie Treloar Sampson is absolutely vibrant! "Water" opens like a campfire lullaby then flows into something more. "Cotton Candy Girl" navigates the nostalgia of youth and how time changes us. It kind of reminds me of post-modern '70s folk. Timeless is probably more accurate, but I get paid the big bucks to make up genres that don't exist. "Pangea" rocks against the continental drifts of a past relationship with searing lines like, "All I know is what I feel and it's all too fucking real, going to make this good as a death row meal." My favorite is the ballad "Fits and Starts" because the sparse instrumentation of the piano and percussion allows one to sway in the glow of Sampson's vocals. *I Thought I Was Dead, but I Was Really Alive* is available on all the streaming sites.

## **Glowing Cloud — *All My Psychic Children***

Glowing Cloud is a solo project by local musician veteran Eric Smith (Sweet Dreams, The Cold War). *All My Psychic Children* reminds me of a lo-fi version of Spacehog jamming with My Bloody Valentine on a set of Slowdive covers. The spacey imagery, both lyrically and musically, throughout the EP makes sense given Smith has been a UFO researcher for years. The verse of "Hanging Around" reminds me of an extraterrestrial Mickey and Sylvia tribute band till the chorus blasts into the horizon. My favorite track here is "Kevin's Gate," which has a mid-'90s Dinosaur Jr. meets The Rentals. *All My Psychic Children* is up under Glowing Child on all the major streaming platforms.

## **The Hold Steady — *Open Door Policy* (Positive Jams)**

The first half of *Open Door Policy* is excellent, arguably as good as anything that they have done. On "The Feelers," singer/guitarist Craig Finn narrates a story of a sunrise meetup to set prices that carries to a woman putting out the feelers under a poster of a spaceman saying, "Take me to your dealer." Finn's lyrics are short stories that come alive in the music of The Hold Steady. "Spices" kicks off with Tad Kubler's ominous guitar riff as Finn narrates a story of that person who comes back to town, and trouble inevitably follows. The Horn Steady (the band's horn section) adds a new dimension to the sound on tracks like "Spices" and "Heavy Covenant." There are ongoing themes of mental illness and a lot of parades happening throughout *Open Door Policy*. My favorite jam is "Lanyards," which tells the story of someone from the midwest who goes out to California to make it in show business, but only lasts four months. It might be harsh to say side B of *Open Door Policy* falls off a cliff, but it is no side A.

## **Wire Lines — *Harvest Verses***

*Harvest Verses*, the second full-length from Wire Lines, explodes out of the gate with the punk stomp of "A Wolf for Your Rabbit." On "All of This Belongs to Me," singer Kevin Grant proves after all these years he can still somehow nail hardcore scream. I got a sore throat just thinking about trying. "Semtex" is about as infectious of a love song named after explosives as there is. "Lines in The Sand" kicks in a grinding '90s post-hardcore frenzy. "We Disappear" is a banger that rocks like early Husker Du playing Thin Lizzy outtakes. My two favorites here are "This Ark" and the closing "Spirits." "This Ark" moves at a breakneck pace with lyrics offering hope on an otherwise stormy sea. "Spirits" has these fantastic hypnotic guitars and just has a different feel from everything else on the record. *Harvest Verses* is available on all the streaming services and there may actually be physical copies available too!

### **The Moodrunners — Self-titled**

The debut EP from The Moodrunners explodes like a neutron bomb of power pop. It's like The Jam meets The Strokes, noisier than The Knack, without all the indulgent Elvis Costello lyrics. The lead single, "Better Skies," is already blowing up on radio in Japan and is sure to be the anthem of summer. Even on a song that kind of sucks like "Drown," the energy has an I-bet-this-would-be-good-live vibe. "All In" shreds with arena riffs, stadium struts, and stops and starts, capped off with a sidecar pit sing-along chorus. My favorite is "Scrap Medal," which combines all the best elements of punk, garage and rock. It's like Generation X meets Thin Lizzy meets Dramarama with a sprinkle of '60s The Who. The Moodrunners are planning to return to the stage this May; keep your eyes peeled for a date. Till then, this biscuit will drop on April 1 on Napster and all other streaming platforms. No joke.

### **Shows:**

As live music creeps back into the nightlife, here are a couple of upcoming shows at Askew. These are the only shows I've seen listed for April, but Union Station Brewery has been having live music on weekends. I believe Dusk is also going to start having live music in April.

Sugar Cones, The Portals, and Allison Rose will rock Askew in Providence on April 3. Doors are at 7pm.

Lenny Lashley's Gang Of One is at Askew on April 17. Doors are at 7pm.

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