

STACKS

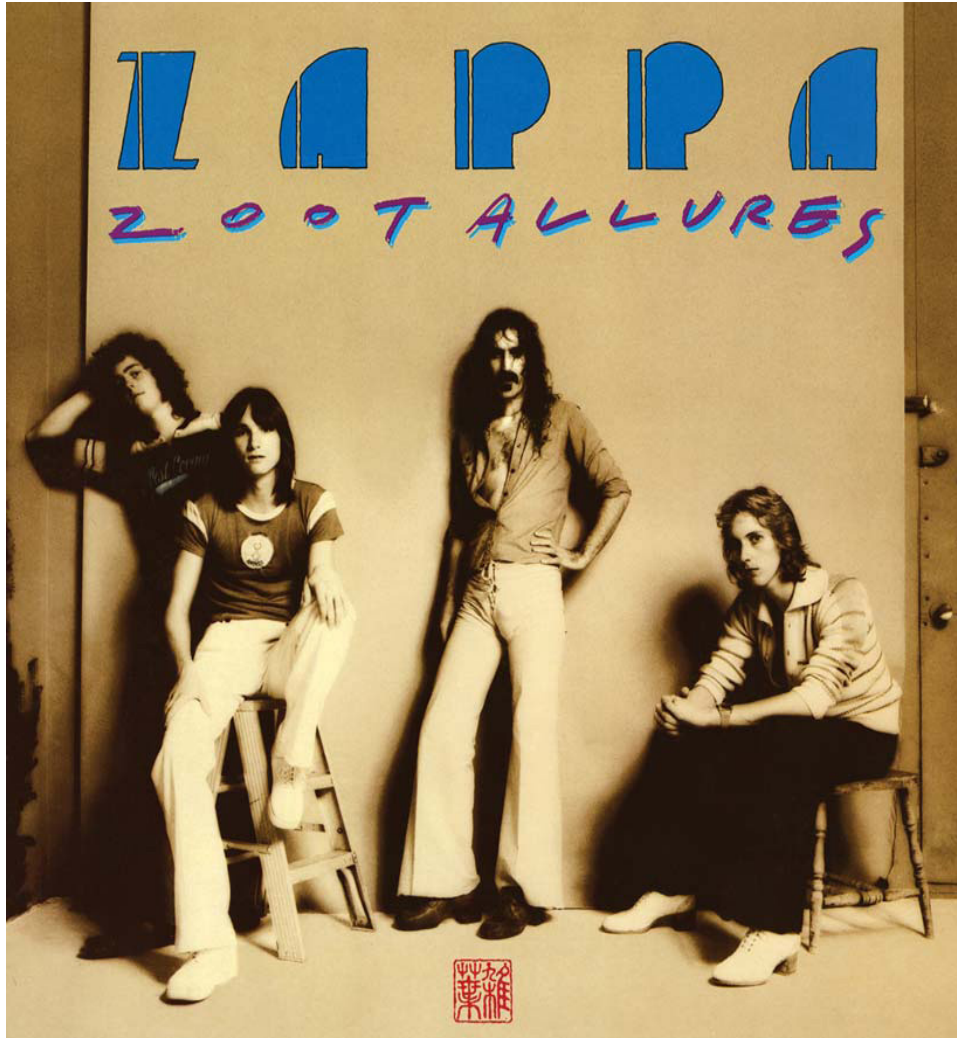
A monthly review of newly acquired records in my collection



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December 2023

ZAPPA ZOOT ALLURES (1976)



This is my first time ever listening to Frank Zappa. I actually picked this up in a book store by me that's a bit of a happy place for me. I've heard all sorts of things about the legend that is Frank Zappa, so I had to check this out.

One track in and you can already tell this album is a killer. In the moment I couldn't really keep track of what the first track is about. I was honestly focused on the instrumentation of this album as it was so insanely awesome. From what I could gather, the first track sounds like I'm being berated by a bunch of Muppets. I mean that as a compliment I swear.

Later in the album the wailing honestly reminded me of Yoko Ono of all things. And to start naming some tracks: I can say that Ms. Pinky is a song that equates to "Yes I have sex, can you tell?" And that's neither a bad or a good thing as I can list off a plethora of songs like that varying in quality.

Addmittedly I need to give this album another listen as at the moment the lyrics feel like utter nonsense in a blender to me. Especially when relying on my not so great memory while reading off notes on my phone. However bizzare the lyrics may be, the instrumentation really shines. And honestly insane guitar work is what I came to Zappa for anyways.

Overall it's a fun listen! And in a word: Goofy.

ZAPPA®

PETE TOWNSHEND
(AND FRIENDS)
THE IRON MAN: THE MUSICAL
(1989)

I. Love. Rock Operas. And musicals.

When I heard that this album led Pete Townshend, of the fucking WHO to be involved with the absolute masterpiece that is the 1999 film, The Iron Giant? I had to give this thing a listen.

And honestly? Eh? But the good kinda eh. I'll explain.

The Iron Man is a musical written by Pete Townshend of The Who. It's an adaption of a book by Ted Hughes and would eventually be adapted by The Iron Giant film. Which was originally going to be based on this album.

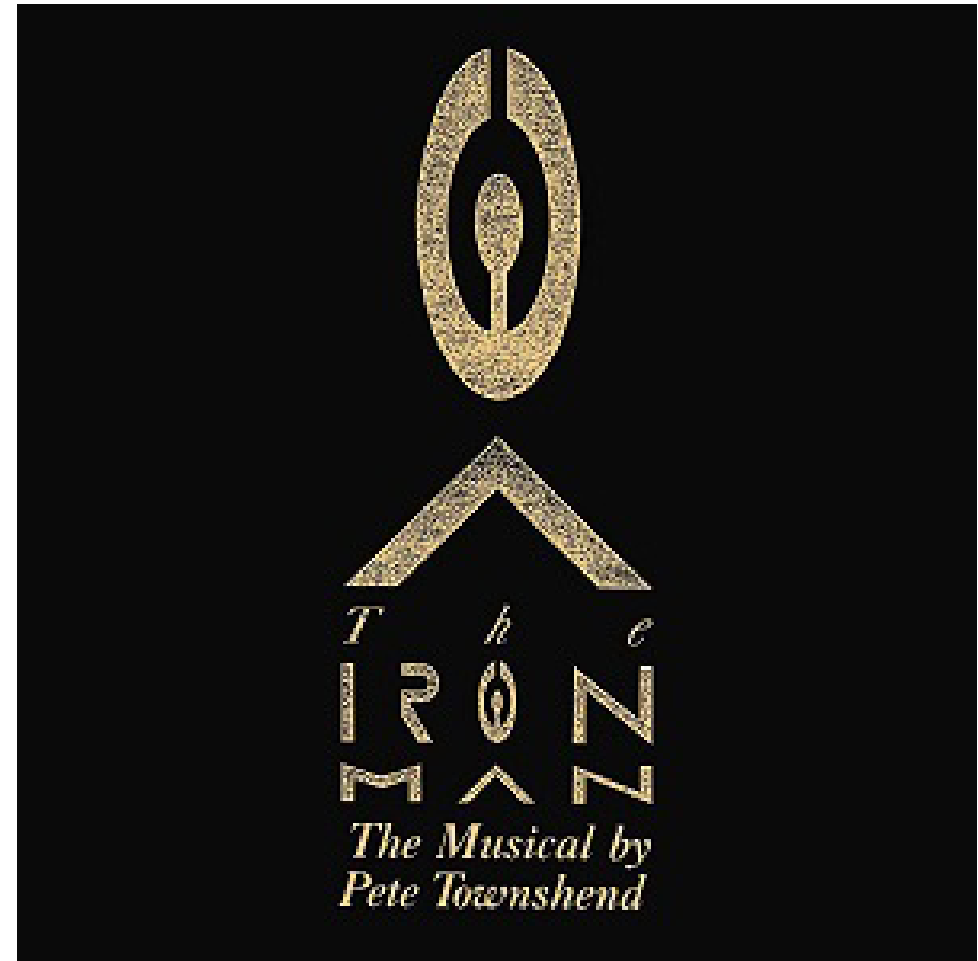
However there is not a lot of meat on it's bones here. Usually I'd expect these Rock Operas and dare I say, Cast Recordings to be 2 LPs which usually equates to the 2 hours of music in an average musical. There are 12 songs here.

But the length isn't that huge of a deal. How about the music?

Again, eh. Like it's good music, but I can't tell you a single one I really remember except for one. And that one is Fast Food.

Fast Food is a song performed by Nina Simone and it is something. At this point in the story a giant purple dragon has arrived to Earth and demanded that Earth provide her people to eat. (Don't remember that part of the film) That's what this song is about. And I can tell you it's just as wild as it's sounds and while I wouldn't call it great, I'd call it very fun. Overall the rest of the music really runs on the "We Have Phil Collins at Home" side of things.

Honestly it has so much unforgettable music but the absurdness of it all just really makes me want to listen to it again rather soon. Give this one if you REALLY like crazy off-the-wall Rock Operas. Or Phil Collins.



literally all the cover images I try to find for
this are so small with why

MARINA AND THE DIAMONDS

THE FAMILY JEWELS (2010)



I don't listen to much modern pop anymore, and this is as close as I tend to get. After falling hard for Marina's style of pop in *Electra Heart*, I was more than happy to pick this one up, her brand of fluffy upbeat pop is just as satisfying here as well!

Marina continues to set a standard for me in the genre of synth-pop, particularly in the song *Shampain* that has some stellar use of synth and some really awesome vocal harmonies. The song *Girls* is definitely a favorite of mine from this album, and the use of accordion in that song is a surprise to be sure, but a welcome one indeed.

The quality never lets up as shortly after *Girls* comes the wonderfully whimsical *Mowgli's Band*. And once you've finished side 1, you're treated to one of the best side 2s that I've ever come across.

Big standouts: *Guilty*, *Hermit the Frog*, *Girls*, *Shampain* (Andddd all of Side 2)

Marina
& the diamonds

BRANDI CARLILE

THE FIREWATCHER'S DAUGHTER (2015)

Brandi Carlile is an amazing singer-songwriter and I'm upset I haven't properly sat down and listened to an album by her until now.

I was first introduced to Carlile thanks to Rock Band 4, which has the song Mainstream Kid from this album in it. (And I stand by that it is the most fun to play of any Rock Band song ever.) If you're into folk or even rock, because this is definitely a folk rock album, give this one a listen.

Overall the album delivers an uplifting cozy vibe that's a perfect soundtrack for me to listen to while I'm stretched out on the couch, cozying up with my cat at night. I'm going to point to Mainstream Kid again to being my absolute favorite from this album. It's a rollicking up beat and punchy song compared to most of the album and it just hits all the right buttons for me. The guitar and vocal work on that song as well as the rest of the album are stellar.

I also really have to recommend The Stranger at My Door. A chill, yet upbeat folk song. More reserved compared to Mainstream Kid but again the songwriting and story-telling are on full display here. And I'm not gonna lie the melody reminds me of songs from Evita of all things at times.

If you've never listened to a folk album, this album would be a great entry point.



THE WHITE STRIPES

ELEPHANT (2003)



Elephant is an album I've been searching for on a good price for a while. Yesterday at the time of writing, I found it for 30 buckaroos at Tone Deaf Records here in Chicago.

Of course the most famous song on this album is Seven Nation Army, which is actually in . I first encountered the song in Middle School where I got to play the iconic bassline on trombone, but my band days are a story for another time.

As expected from Jack White, the guitar work is absolutely stellar, and the songs drip with his inimitable talent. And it can be heard on just about every track on this albym from beginning to end. Meg White's presence on the drums goes so unbelievably hard at time, and I noticed it first on I Just Don't Know What To Do with Myself (a Dusty Springfield cover.)

Reading the liner notes it's also cool to see that "No computers were used during the writing, recording, mixing, or mastering of this record" (Google told me that no equipment more recent than 1963 was used!) This level of dedication really sells the album for me. I'm not shirking off computers of course but that level of dedication to the craft is very impressive.

Big standout tracks would of course be Seven Nation Army and The Hardest Button to Button. Those are easy to name. However You've Got Her In Your Pocket is such a wonderful song as well and a strong contender for favorite song on the album.

NAKED RAYGUN

OVER THE OVERLORDS (2021)

I've heard Naked Raygun's name tossed around pretty often at punk shows, especially when I ask for recommendations from people or I'm reading the back of jackets. I've never had a chance to listen to them however.

So, I picked up Over the Overlords. The hype sticker boasting that it's their first album in 30 years. Maybe I should've started somewhere else. Because while the songs are enjoyable it doesn't seem to match the level of hype I've gotten about the band through word of mouth.

Honestly what caught my eye was the album cover, a futuristic woman with a raygun and a Chicago patch. Alluding to some sort of struggle against a dystopian/totalitarian government. And the songs certainly fall in line with that theme. However, similar with The Iron Man (go back a few pages), they are mostly forgettable.

From my notes:

Sould Hole Suffers is a good song. Superheros mentions of killing nazis makes it a fun one. Even if it's a bit cheesy. Suicide Bomb is the heaviest song of side 1 and honestly a really good one..the echoing vocals against the heavier parts really make for a cool stark contrast as the kick drum and guitar pounds your ears.

Usually I have a bit more written down than just that, and I can boil it down into one of these reviews. I will say that despite the songs being generic, they do keep the energy up. Especially the insanely long outro of side 2 which was honestly very impressive.

I do think it deserves another listen, but it's not high on my list.



NINE INCH NAILS

PRETTY HATE MACHINE (1989)

In my notes I've written "Listen to album again before writing full review", alas procrastination has taken hold, so I apologize if this one isn't as full as other reviews.

Like Naked Raygun, Nine Inch Nails is one of those bands I've heard about everywhere, seen on tee-shirts, etc, etc. I was delighted to find it in my records from the Rattleback Records Club subscription.

Having zero experience, I was a bit surprised to see NIN is an industrial rock band, as I always got the vibe they were metal. My last attempt at getting into industrial didn't work out too well, as it was a bit too...abstract for my tastes. However, with NIN's brand of industrial, I loved it.

The best way I can describe this album is that it sounds like the Y2K aesthetic looks like (Which is odd I described it like that, when the album is from 1989), if that makes sense. The thumping bass, and deep echoy toms quickly become iconic and prevalent in most of the songs on this album. I am definitely seeking out more of NIN after this. And hopefully after I've given Pretty Hate Machine a few more listens.

Favorite tracks: That's What I Get, Ringfinger, Down In It.



***This Month:
Naked Raygun? Naked Raygun.
The Firewatcher's Daughter!
Ugly Love Computer
The Iron Giant: The Musical?
Zoots sure are alluring!
The Family Jewels!
Seven Nation Army!***

*This month's cover image is courtesy of /u/SinkPitiful8834
on Reddit. Awesome setup!*

Lennon McCrea (She/Her) Zine #26
Chicago 2023
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