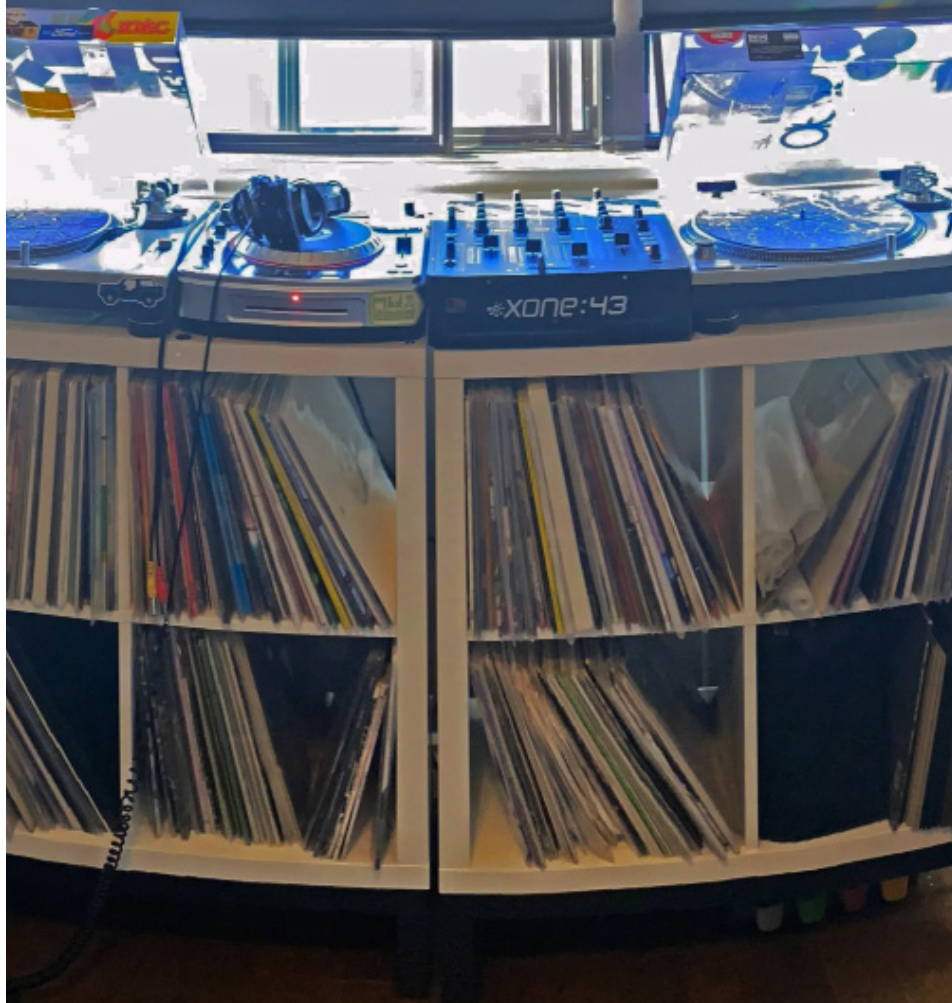


# STACKS

A monthly review of newly acquired records in my collection



Issue #4

January 2024

Note: Last Issue there was a typo (incomplete sentence, leftover somehow from editing) in the review for Elephant that I only noticed while binding the copies. My apologies.



## GORILLAZ SONG MACHINE (2020)

Gorillaz released tracks off of Song Machine throughout the 2020 pandemic. I specifically remember watching the Pac-Man and Valley of the Pagens videos the minute they dropped. I always meant to get this album earlier, but better late than never.

This album has tons of killer tracks, Strange Times acts as a great way of starting off the album, and the bass line in Valley of the Pagens is wonderful. Fun Fact: The original video for Valley of the Pagens was filmed in Grand Theft Auto V, it's been since taken down from the Gorillaz youtube channel, but re-uploads exist.

Although I didn't enjoy it when the song originally dropped, The Pink Phantom is a lot better than I remembered. I just always thought that 6lack and Elton John didn't mesh well for the song but from this re-listen, I actually find it to be one of the best tracks of the album. I think as an Elton John fan that 6lack's auto-tune pulled me out of it but for whatever reason it doesn't bother me as much anymore.

Pac-Man is still my favorite track off the entire album, the blend of the bass, percussion and vocals from Damon and the verses by Schoolboy Q just serve to be the icing on the cake of this album. Overall, the album doesn't disappoint one bit.

Standout Tracks:

Pac-Man  
Valley of the Pagens  
The Pink Phantom

# FLUMMOX

## REPHLUMMOXED (1989)

So confession time, this is actually my second copy of this album on vinyl. I have the official release, while this time I finally took the chance to snag one of those Needlejuice test pressings.

If you're not familiar with Flummox, they're an amazing trans-led genre-fluid band from Murfreesboro, Tennessee that leans towards metal in their sound. I've had the chance to see them in concert and they are absolutely one of the best bands to see live and if you have the chance, do not pass it up. Their shows tend to be quite theatrical.

Anyhoo, the album is just as great and nuts as I remember it. The melodies and guitar work bouncing off the walls just like all of their other work. And the INSANE bass work by front woman, Ally, is always awesome to hear. The opening track sets the tone for the entire record and it sets it fast.

Some of their awesome talent on display, especially in Hummingbird Anthem, which turns from metal to rock-a-billy mid song yet doesn't let down with the keys holding things up between sections.

Standout Tracks:

Planet Cancer  
Hummingbird Anthem  
The Ghost of Ronnie Dio  
Pan's Daughter



# DAFT PUNK RANDOM ACCESS MEMORIES (DRUMLESS EDITION) (2023)



This was a very unusual experience.

It's Random Access Memories, but with no drums. I believe that it was released for DJs to use in mixes cos I can't quite see what other purpose this album could serve.

That's not to say that it's not any fun to listen to. Some works here and some don't. Within sounds quite nice and intimate, and the chimes in the vinyl release come across pristine. However then you have Giorgio by Mulder which is absolutely hilarious. Especially when you're waiting for the click on the 24 track....which isn't there making the absence of the drums make a lot of the music feel empty without the punch that would accentuate the tracks.

Get Lucky just sounds so so wrong without the drums. When you know REM tracks you realize how hollow the album can sound in most sections without the drums. The only other tracks I can say that work with this would be Instant Crush (which comes across like an indie pop song) and Touch.

Touch is just as painful now as it has been since Daft Punk broke up but it's honestly the only track that I can say that I would want to hear drumless and pick apart the instruments. That being said it's not as different but the isolated vocals cut to the core.

Overall, it's an interesting experiment, but just that: an experiment. And honestly? A bit of a pointless one. Get this if you really like Daft Punk.

# ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

## LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS (1986)

Little Shop of Horrors has always been a favorite musical and film of mine. If you're not familiar, the plot centers around a man who works in a florist shop raising a strange and unusual breed of flytrap with a craving for human blood. Back when I started collecting in High School, this was one of the first albums I ordered. This copy is a Japanese pressing that I ran thru the Spin Clean record cleaner (more on that later.)

The cool thing about this soundtrack is the differences between the music heard in the film and on other releases. For example, the CD release tends to have different mixes of the songs that you won't hear on the vinyl release. For film differences I have a plethora as so much was changed so late into production. To name a few: The Voice of God in the Prolouge is different in the film, Seymour's Soloiquy (the best part of the Meek Shall Inherit) was cut from the film, and Don't Feed The Plants the song from the infamous cut ending (later reinstated with the director's cut.) There are also additional verses and lines in some songs not present in the film most of which being in Mean Green Mother From Outer Space.

I really want to draw attention to Ellen Greene's performance on this soundtrack. She originated the role of Audrey Off-Broadway and returned for the film. When you hear her sing you can hear her voice flip from the Audrey voice and her natural singing voice is really cool and she's the standout of the cast. That being said the other performers, including Rick Moranis more than hold their own here as well.

Being a fan of the musical I'm also pretty intimately familiar with the soundtrack and had it on constantly in High School. So it was really cool to be able to notice instrumentations and other things on this soundtrack that I swear were never there before. For example: the chimes in Downtown, the guitar and bass in Some Fun Now, bongos during Dentist!, and the hidden organ during Feed Me, and the subtle guitar riffs during Suppertime. It really goes to show what a good pressing of an album, as well as some good cleaning of your records can bring to the (turn)table.



WEEZER

## WEEZER (BLACK ALBUM) (2003)



I've heard quite a bit about this album from Weezer fans, and I can immediately see why some do not like this one.

Straight from the get-go, Can't Knock the Hustle is a very poppy song. Not quite the same as Beverly Hills (yet it wouldn't feel out of place sharing a playlist.) Now pop isn't bad. But when you look at the album cover you think that this album would be heavier or have darker material. Honestly though, that doesn't bother me as much, the different sound here is still pretty nice (in a Weezer ranking it wouldn't be that high up for me however.)

Tracks like High as a Kite are bit more like a classic Weezer sound with a few more instruments thrown in for good measure and although the track Zombie Bastards makes me laugh and honestly was a contender for favorite track off the album, I have to give it to High as a Kite. Cuomo's vocals just layer so wonderfully over the backing instruments.

Moving on to the liner notes--

I get they wanted to lean into black and a darker color motif, but did they really have to make the lyrics a dark grewy on a black background? I just want to read the lyrics. While it looks neat and subtle for the album cover I'm straining my eyes just to try and read the insert. It actually hurts to read. I gotta say though, my vinyl copy is pretty spiffy. It sounds great and the half black, half clear record is a very clean look.

# PETER GABRIEL

## I/O (DARK SIDE MIXES) (2023)

What a brilliant package.

Gabriel provides you with a big beautiful booklet filled with lyrics and art meant to be viewed alongside the music along with notes on the pieces really help with the enjoyment of the work as a whole.

Because that's what I/O is, it's more than an album, it's a multimedia piece of consisting of brilliant music and brilliant art that work together amazingly well. Two distinct mixes were released with the project even extending to the release schedule of the singles. (Bright Side singles were released every full moon, while Dark Side mixes were released every new moon.) This level of artistic commitment and collaboration is honestly astounding.

Onto the music. Panopticom is one of the best ways to open an album that I've heard in a while. I've picked up the Dark Side mix of the album and there are so many details here that I'm sure I didn't pick up on my first listen. (Even as I'm writing this I'm noticing the ringing in the verses of the song that I swear weren't there before.)

Road to Joy has got to be my favorite track off the album. The accompanying piece of art with it as well as the story of the artist, Ai Weiwei (look him up, seriously) brings it into an amazingly compelling piece.

Overall, the synergy between the music and works of art presented is unreal. Especially when considering that most of the art and songs were created independently of each other. You sit there and listen to the music, you look at the art and you're like "Yup, Chroniques avec la Nature looks exactly what Olive Tree sounds like."

Time to listen to this again.



# PARALLEL GROOVES

## *The Spin-Clean Record Washing System*

Welcome to a new part of Stacks, Parallel Grooves. In this section expect to see things tangentially related to records and the hobby as a whole. Today we're covering the Spin-Clean Record Washing System.

I recently picked up my own Spin-Clean around Black Friday as it was finally on sale, as it can be a bit pricey. I got mine for around \$50. Cleaning records is important and it's something I already do before putting a record on the platter, the Spin-Clean system aims to do deep cleans of records and to hopefully eliminate most surface noise.

The system works by filling a basin with distilled water and adding cleaning fluid. You put record in the basin, on some rollers and in between two brushes inside, and slowly spin the record. Of course if you've been in the hobby for a while I'm sure you're aware of this style of record cleaner. And it definitely does a good job at the cost of time. It's recommended to clean in batches and have 20-50 records ready for cleaning and honestly for me that's asking a bit.

I will be honest, I wasn't expecting the results that I got out of using it! Not this thing does such an amazing job at cleaning records, that I'm aiming to run any record I pick up, new or used, through this thing.

I went ahead and did a batch of around 25 records I had in my queue of new arrivals and listening to them (Like I did with Little Shop of Horrors mentioned earlier) and I have a seriously improved listening experience.

Now I always hand cleaned records before with some home made solution and rinse from some spray bottles before listening and while it certainly helped, the spin-clean definitely does a better job at really doing a deep clean of the grooves.

However, there is at least one major downside to this kit and that is the time it takes to clean records. You really need to set aside time and do a batch of around 20-50 which can be time consuming. Naturally, I'd rather spend more time listening than cleaning, not that I mind cleaning. After all, the results really speak for themselves and once you get into the rhythm of the cleaning process, that stack will whittle itself down in no time.

Alternatively, you can hold the water in the basin for up to 1 week. So I'm also planning on trying to get as much use out of this as I can by using it to clean any record I pull off the shelf to listen to and go from there to the platter.

One of these days I'll have to go through and do a full deep clean of my collection, but seeing as we're sitting at around 300-400 records, I'm not quite sure I'm ready to set aside that amount of time to dedicate to a deep clean. That doesn't change the quality and effectiveness of this product in the slightest, which I can highly recommend.



***This Month:  
Feed Me!  
I/O  
Possums?  
Music Contraption!  
Carl Weezer!  
Someone muted the drum track...  
Spin N' Clean!***

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