

STACKS

a monthly review of records from my collection

Issue #5

February 2024

New Year, New Stacks

Look, I know it says February on the cover, but at the time of writing? It's January 4th, and I just dropped off the January issue of Stacks at Quimby's. But I've been experimenting with things in this zine, and I thought it would be time to address them!

1. The new typeface for the logo! Previously, I was using the Distro Vinyl font. Here on out, it's Fletcher Jumpy Typewriter (by recommendation of my girl-friend). I'm thinking every calendar year, I'll switch up the typeface for the front.

2. New sections of the zine? Articles? I don't know what to call it. Sections like this one you're reading right now, which I'll probably use to put whatever kind of message I have for the month. I'll list some extra album recommendations in Lennon's Quick Picks, usually albums that didn't make the cut for an issue for whatever reason. (Being in Quick Picks doesn't mean I won't dedicate a page to it in the future). And carrying over from the last issue, Parallel Grooves, where I talk about vinyl-adjacent or other hi-fi things. (This month, it's Laserdisc!) And I'll still keep the same amount of reviews as I always do.

3. I'm no longer confining myself to NEW purchases. Anything in my record collection is now fair game to be reviewed! (It was a dumb limitation anyway!)

This is my first zine series, and I've loved every bit of it so far. I hope you'll continue to stick with me into 2024 as Stacks continues to evolve, and hopefully, you'll find some wonderful music along the way!

- Lennon McCrea

Want to send album recommendations?
Reach out on my guestbook at
zinesbylennon.neocities.org
or shoot me an ask or a message on tumblr at
zinesbylennon

If I end up reviewing it, I'll make sure you're credited for the recommendation and send you a free copy!

Lennon's Quick Picks

Internet Arms - Diane Coffee

(If you liked *Midnights* by Taylor Swift)

Take Back The Night - Starbenders

(If you like Glam Rock or had a crush on the Hex Girls)

Axis: As Bold as Love - The Jimi Hendrix Experience

(If you like Psychedelic Rock and have somehow not heard Hendrix yet)

Automatic for the People - R.E.M.

(If you want to know what songs you really want playing at your funeral)

Thanks Marc!

Indelibly Stamped - Supertramp

(An underrated album that's often overlooked by fans of Supertramp)

The Time Machine - Alan Parsons

(If you finished The Alan Parsons Project and want more to listen to)

Tallahassee - The Mountain Goats

(If you're sad and need an album about heartbreak)

S.S. Krill - Billy Cobb

(Fans of *Our Flag Means Death*, this is the gay pirate opera for you)

FUCK - UgLi

(If you're an angry queer like me)

ABBA THE VISITORS (1981)

So initially, I was planning on reviewing ABBA: Live, but I managed to pick up a copy of the recent Abbey Road half-speed master of The Visitors, which just so happens to be my favorite ABBA album and led me to get into their music.

In 1981, this was to be ABBA's final album (until Voyage was released), and as a result, the songs and sound of ABBA have matured quite a bit. Overall, this album has a darker tone with themes of failing relationships in many of the songs. Benny and Bjorn pulled no punches with their song-writing in this album and chose a great way to open it with the title track. I love how it opens up musically during the chorus, with the lead synths from the verses dropping out at that point.

Bjorn's singing in Two for the Price of One stands out a bit thematically from the rest of the album but was quickly cemented as a classic in their catalog. (I had someone point out that story-wise, it's similar to Escape (The Margarita Song))

Another great song off the album would be Slipping Through My Fingers, a song about a different type of relationship (that being between a mother and a daughter.) Agnetha and Frida get some gorgeous harmonies together, and the combination of beautiful instrumentation and those excellent harmonies combine for a gut-wrenching song.

The final song, Like an Angel Passing Through, is a song that is constantly glossed over. It's hauntingly minimal and a great way to end the album with Frida's voice over the sounds of a music box and some orchestral flourishes.

I would recommend this to just about anybody who enjoys 80s pop or musicals since ABBA's music tends to be adjacent to that of musical theatre.





THE PILLOWS FLCL: PROGRESSIVE/ALTERNATIVE (2018)

FLCL has the best music of any anime I've ever seen. This is mainly due to the Japanese alt-rock band The Pillows. With FLCL Progressive and Alternative, they actually re-recorded music featured in the original series.

The Pillows have always been the perfect fit for an anime about growing up. Their music feels like summer to me, which speaks to me since most of my childhood memories are associated with summer. As a result, this soundtrack is just what the doctor ordered for these cold Chicago mornings.

Aside from growing up, their music has become so entangled with FLCL that the songs become inseparable from the characters. Little Busters is a prime example of this, as it's used as a theme consistently throughout the anime, usually during transformations or climactic ends to giant robot battles.

Thank You, My Twilight, my favorite track on this soundtrack, is a song I cannot separate from Hidomi since she uses it as her alarm in the first episode of FLCL: Progressive (something I've started to do in the morning too!)

This is a great place to start if you've never listened to The Pillows. Overall, the FLCL soundtracks function as a "Best of" album for The Pillows, and it's just one hit after another. I would argue that the FLCL soundtracks (of which there are 3 others just from the first season) make for the best soundtrack of any anime.

ARCADIA GREY

KONAMI CODE
(2019)

I recently got to see Arcadia Grey, and damn, do they kick ass. Arcadia Grey is a local Chicago band I've heard about from other people at various shows, yet I repeatedly managed to miss it. I finally got to see them perform in November (alongside JER, but that's for another time), and they're quickly becoming a favorite of mine in the local scene.

Arcadia Grey's sound tends to involve heavy guitar and percussion, and with pop culture references, sometimes just as titles, which you'll see with the tracklist of this album.

Konami Code starts off with one of my favorite songs by them, Moshpit Girlfriend. It's a great way to start the album and even contains an interpolation of the Steven Universe theme song. It's an excellent way to kick off the album and sets the tone.

Godzilla '98 Sux!! is another fantastic song on the album. "I guess I'm only good for being fucked or being left" is a sentiment that I can relate to all too well. The lead guitar in this track just rips along during the verses; it's lovely. It's a song that is in constant rotation alongside Moshpit Girlfriend when I'm listening to music digitally.

The beginning of It's Always Raining in Philadelphia is complete ear candy. I love it. It's also one of the mellower songs on the album, despite still carrying that heavy sound the rest of the album has.

I can say that Arcadia Grey's is relatively unmatched and absolutely electric in person, and it has the best band members I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. Seriously, check them out if you haven't already. Their entire discography is only 80 cents on Bandcamp, which is absolutely insane.



**DAVE CLARK'S
TIME: THE ALBUM
(1986)**



This is one of those albums I bought because it looked cool, and sometimes that pays off. Time: The Album isn't bad. It's a concept album for Dave Clark's 1986 musical of the same name. That being said, I'm not sure what it's about, but it has some pretty good songs, with 80s rock full of all the synth and guitar you can handle. It wouldn't sound out of place with Journey or Survivor.

The album also boasts a strong cast featuring Freddie Mercury, Julian Lennon, Stevie Wonder, and Murray Head. (Who you might remember from my review of Chess.) This star power is another reason I rescued this copy from the dusty basement of the thrift store I found it in. Weirdly enough, my copy has two inserts for record #2 but missing the insert for record #1 (both discs were there), and the records are the thinnest I've ever handled and seem like they could crack at the slightest breeze.

The big standout on this album is Time, performed by Freddie Mercury. Of course, Freddie's vocals are the star of this song, which should surprise no one. But I am a bit upset it's cut short (for the sake of the plot, apparently Freddie is abducted to stand trial as the defense for all of planet Earth against the Time Lords in trial for Earth's fate.)

Time had a theatre run in London from 1986 to 1988, but ultimately closed because it wasn't making the theatre enough money. It's hard to talk about this album. Musically, it's good. But I can see this having trouble capturing audiences. A friend of mine described it best as a "sort of sci-fi Sunday school lesson." If you really like concept albums, maybe check this one out, then?

Tracks to listen to: Time, One Human Family, Brother in Soul, Case for the Prosecution

SHOCK TREATMENT

ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK

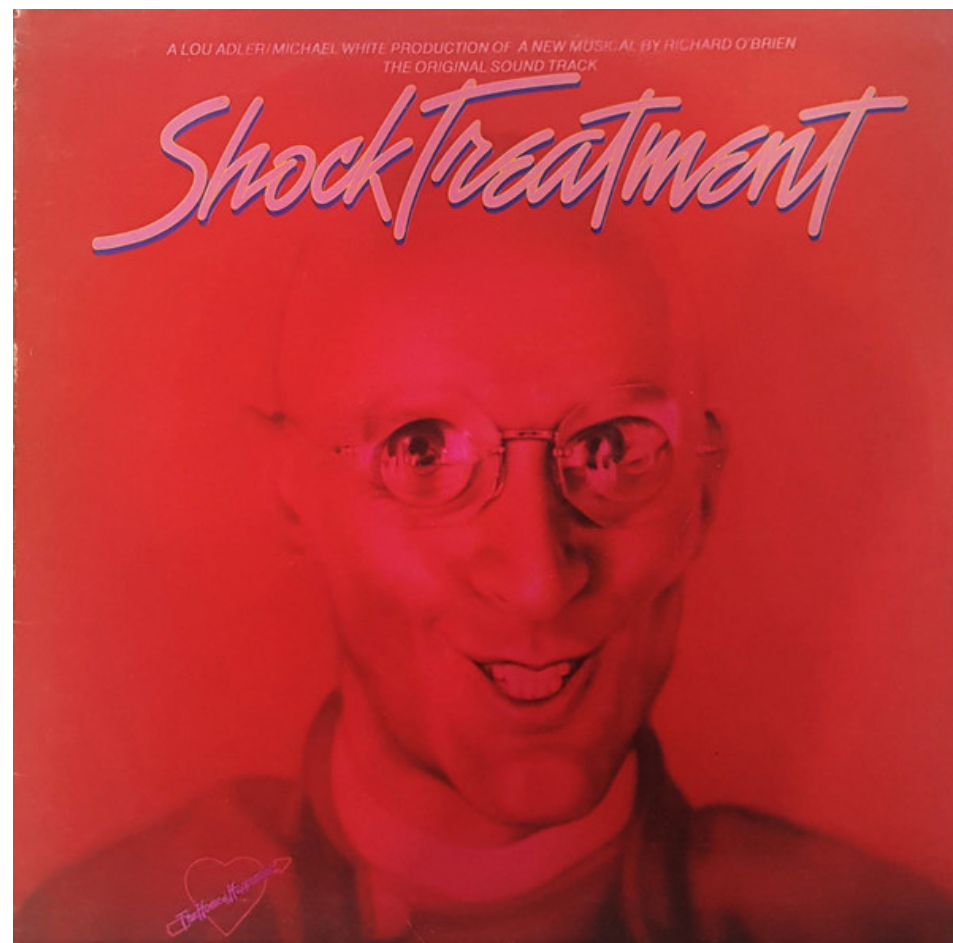
(1981)

Shock Treatment is the “Not a Sequel, Not a Prequel, But an Equal” to the Rocky Horror Picture Show and probably my favorite movie ever. I own it many times over and prefer it to Rocky, mostly because I believe the music is better here.

Although some of the cast returns from Rocky (Richard O’Brien, Little Nell, Patricia Quinn), others are notably absent. Here, Jessica Harper and Cliff DeYoung play Janet and Brad. Jessica Harper kills it, and I think she has a better voice than Susan Sarandon. However, I will say that Rocky Horror has a leg up in terms of plot. But if you’re a fan of bizarre films and a plot centering on how fame can destroy a person, you’re in for a treat.

Some songs here are reminiscent of Rocky, like Little Black Dress, functionally serving as the Time Warp for this film. And a particularly questionable song, to say the least, is Thank God I’m a Man. It’s a song that amounts to the ‘Fragile Masculinity Song,’ sung by Janet’s father. While the lyrical content isn’t something I agree with, it’s worth saying that it definitely serves the character who sings it.

On the other hand, songs like Bitchin’ In the Kitchen, Looking for Trade, and In My Own Way show off Jessica Harper’s range in voice. Something about Jessica Harper’s lower voice range has a style that fits each song here and especially pairs well with Janet taking center stage in this story. Honestly, I don’t think Susan Sarandon would have cut it here. Duel Duet is also a song worth discussing as Cliff DeYoung pulls double duty here as both Brad and Farley Flavors. He differentiates between the two characters with just his voice and acting skills. It’s nuts just hearing on the recording how he goes from the more collected, calm, almost folksy voice to the more untamed, louder, rockstar-esque voice of Farley. If you’re a Rocky Horror fan, you owe it to yourself to check this one out.



OSAKA POPSTAR OSAKA POPSTAR AND THE AMERICAN LEGENDS OF PUNK (2006)

Osaka Popstar is a pop punk cover band featuring John Cafiero, Dez Cadena, Ivan Julian, Jerry Only, and Marky Ramone.

My first encounter with them was through my Nintendo 3DS, of all things. They released several music videos through Nintendo Video, the ones I remember being Wicked World and Insects. This album is the only one released by the band. Most of the songs on it are covers, like the aforementioned Wicked World, a cover of a song by Daniel Johnston, who also appears on the album as a guest vocalist on A Man of Constant Sorrow.

Some songs might be more familiar here than others, like the Sailor Moon and Astro Boy theme songs. There's a good range of songs here, from anime themes to folk songs and even a cover of The Christmas That Almost Wasn't. (Originating from an obscure Christmas special from the 1970s.) Of course, they're all given a pop punk make-over, with Marky Ramone's drumming really being my highlight here.

Insects is my favorite song from the album. Apart from the connection to my childhood, the guitar work and drumming here are pristine. It's also worth mentioning that the song was originally written by the Kids of Widney High, a band comprised of disabled students from Widney High School, a school for special education.

On the whole, this album is fun. Even the original songs by John Cafiero follow that rule of fun, with the songs being about Cap'n Crunch, Super Heroes, and Shaolin Monkeys. If you're into some silliness and goofy fun with your punk, this is the album for you.



GREEN DAY

SAVIORS
(2024)

Holy hell. What an album.

My girlfriend and I were lucky enough to go to the listening party at Bucket O' Blood Records here in Chicago, and what a treat it was to be around other Green Day fans. I can safely say that this is their best work since 21st Century Breakdown. There's a little bit of something in this album for every Green Day fan, with some songs here that sound similar to earlier tracks. Goodnight Adeline uses the same chord progression as When I Come Around, and I also hear a little bit of Stay the Night in Strange Days Are Here to Stay. Rather than coming off as derivative, it feels more like an homage to their career.

My favorite track has got to be Living in the 20s, a song that has been on repeat (along with the rest of the album) for a few days now. It sounds like it could be a holdover from Father of All Motherfuckers musically, but production-wise is much more in line with the rest of their catalog.

Naturally, the singles from the album kick ass as well. People have pointed out that One Eyed Bastard sounds similar to P!nk's So What?, which is a fair assessment. The best single from the album is between Dilemma and The American Dream is Killing Me. Both are such strong songs. I know when Dilemma was released, I wasn't totally keen on it as I was with TA-DIKM when it was released, but it definitely has grown on me over time.

This album is such a step up from Father of All Motherfuckers, which isn't an album I necessarily hated, but definitely a weaker one. I'm excited to see what the future holds for God's (and my) favorite band. We'll be celebrating 20 years of American Idiot this year, and there are also whispers of a Uno, Dos, and Tre remix. Seriously, I cannot wait. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go and listen to this album again.

GREEN DAY



'SAVIORS'

PARALLEL GROOVES

Laserdisc!

I was lucky enough to get a laserdisc player from my girlfriend's mom this Christmas. I still have no idea how she found it. I initially just put it on there on the off chance she happened to know someone who'd have one? I dunno. Regardless, it's probably the coolest thing I own now.

For the uninitiated, Laserdisc is an obsolete video format that holds video files on a large disc the size of an LP using technology similar to that of the DVD. Much like vinyl, you'd have to flip it halfway through a viewing. The thing with Laserdisc is that the media can be found relatively cheaply (I already have a healthy collection comprised mostly of stuff I picked up around Rogers Park and Andersonville). Still, the players, especially working ones, are expensive.



If you're wondering what the experience of a laserdisc is like, the quality sits somewhere between VHS and DVD. But it has the same magical charm that vinyl has for me.

The media comes packaged just like a record, and every time you watch one, you open the huge disc tray on your huge player, pull it out of its sleeve, and place it on the platter. After closing it, you get some wonderful whirring machinery noises before you can hit play. Yes, it's clunky; yes, it takes a while to get into a movie; yes, the discs are enormous, and the quality isn't amazing. But I collect vinyl records, too, and they share some similarities in their drawbacks.

So far, I've viewed Ducktales, Rush: Exit Stage Left, Cats, Les Misérables (The Dream Cast), and Monty Python and the Holy Grail. They've all been delightful, and I will say the sound is terrific (you can toggle between digital and analog, and sometimes there's commentary on an analog track), and the jackets make them feel like a complete package. Sometimes, they are gatefolds like some albums with loads of images and other tidbits inside, amounting to liner notes but for a film.

I've also had the opportunity to track down several box sets. I have Star Wars: The Definitive Edition (which I believe is the origin of many of those 'despecialized' edits if I recall correctly.), The Beatles: Anthology (8 friggin' discs!), a special release of Tron (one of my favorite films), and the 20th Anniversary of the Rocky Horror Picture Show. (I'm waiting for my Japanese copy of Shock Treatment to do a Science Fiction/Double Feature). These boxsets are hefty and often include oodles of extras, from concept art to full-on heavy books. Usually, the extra discs house hours of additional content like deleted scenes or interviews or whatever they decide to throw on there. I don't see much physical video media having much of that anymore when it used to be somewhat standard to have all these extra goodies with DVD and early Blu-Ray releases.

Anyway, don't sleep on Laserdisc. It's undoubtedly a rabbit hole to dive into.



there's a whole regular show episode about the format wars and the 'last laserdisc player' that you should totally watch.

***This Month:
I feel I'm crackin' up
"Ukelele No Good"***



Better watch out or the insects will get you!

DOES THIS BIRD BELONG TO YOU?

***Tick Tock
1972 is dead
the last laserdisc player***

*This month's cover image is courtesy of DJ Stop.
Thanks!*