

The Friends of **STACKS** *Issue*

a review of physical media from our collections



\$6.66

Issue #9

July 2025

Friends of Stacks!

Where would I be without my friends?

Well, still on hiatus for starters. I've been struggling to get out of my zine-making funk for a while now and finally asked for some help. And what a difference that has made! Thus, this is the Friends of Stacks Issue!

Lore, Patrick, and Eels have joined forces and in doing soon taken a bit of a load off my back. So this issue you get three reviews from me and one from each of them! This has helped me to be able to focus on finding my groove and doing that snazzy snazzy logo redesign you find on the cover.

Speaking of the cover, which is befitting of the Friends of Stacks Issue, features my favorite record store ever, Rattleback Records. Paul and everyone who helps run the store are some of the most passionate people I've ever met, and some of the kindest people I've ever met. Go support them if you're ever in town!

Continuing with the friends theme, we check back in on Orlando Musician darling, Marc With a C to talk about his latest auditory adventure, *Steamed Hams*. Delightfully devilish!

Lastly, thank you dear reader. I don't make these zines to make money, I make these zines to blather endlessly about whatever hyperfixation my ADHD has settled upon today in the hopes that someone wants to listen. And since you've picked up this zine, then that hopefully means you do!

- Lennon McCrea

Want to send album recommendations?

Reach out on my guestbook at
zinesbylennon.neocities.org

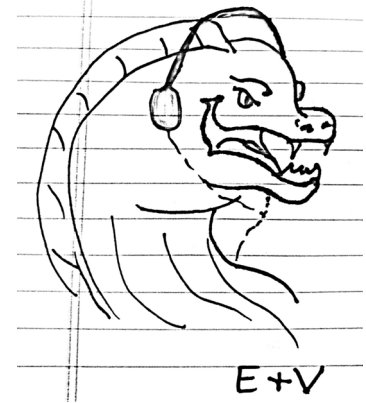
If I end up reviewing it, I'll make sure you're credited for the recommendation and send you a free copy!

We also have digital back issues of Stacks there, and the forgotten music archive, so check it out!

Say hello to my little friends

Here's who they are and why you should care!

Name's Eels, (Elm and Vine, pronouns: they/them). I've been bedroom producing for a decade in 9 different bedrooms/basements/living rooms. Towards the end i spent a few semesters in production and songwriting classes where I learned to listen critically. I'm gonna be picking albums that capture some aspect of what I'm trying to attain in my music specifically for my next project so if that interests you hop aboard and let's boogie.



Hi there! I'm Lore (she/it), a weird trans woman who lives in her headphones and loves music of all kinds, though I have a particular affection for punk, metal, and all things dark and dreary. I run The TGirl Review, a music review site focused on smaller artists, particularly from the trans community. Follow us on Instagram or at TheTGirlReview.com!

hey, i'm patrick! i'm a life-long music geek, playing in bands and collecting physical media for as long as i can remember. while i don't talk about music much, i am a prolific graphic designer! most of my work is fan art, but i've worked for the likes of needlejuice and (^_^) records. you can check out my favorite pieces over at my strawpage if you'd like! Strawpage: the-oatrick.straw.page



TWENTY-ONE PILOTS CLANCY

(2024)

Clancy is the latest effort from Twenty-One Pilots, following the divisive *Scaled and Icy*, and it gives a much darker tone and atmospheric vibe than *Scaled and Icy* had to offer.

“Overcompensate” is a great way to start this album, quite honestly. It does feel a bit like “Heavydirtysoul” off of *Blurryface*, but chalk that down to the general sound of Twenty-One Pilots’ songs.

I should be honest; when *Clancy* was announced, I wasn’t entirely sold. I didn’t care (and still don’t care) for the album cover, and even as the singles were released, especially “Next Semester,” which is an average song at best, I felt like it was a bit of a re-tread. I’ve seen other people point out similar things online, too, that this album really has incorporated the sounds of most of their other albums. Ultimately, however, it’s not a problem. Because once the album was actually released, it turned out the songs worked well together as a single piece. It’s hard for me to say that there’s anything on *Clancy* I’ll be listening to outside its context, however. The one exception I can give is to “Vignette,” but even then, it’s not doing too much new.

This isn’t to say there aren’t good songs here. The aforementioned ready-for-radio “Overcompensate” comes to mind, and “Backslide” is a nice little song. But I really don’t find myself remembering individual songs here. It’s a weird, rare case for me where I like how the piece works as a whole, yet for me, the individual songs fall apart into generic radio pop when played on their own.

Maybe it has to do with re-treading of the sound or material. As a whole, *Clancy* feels almost like a celebration of how Twenty-One Pilots got here. But when those songs are on their own, and I can’t help but scratch my head and think: “Didn’t they just play this song?”



LOLLYGAGGER



TOTAL PARTY KILL

THIS ALBUM HAS BEEN SURVEYED AND SAFELY BAITED
WHERE NEEDED AS OF:

DATE: _____

To report additional problems call **3-1-1**

Wisdom has been buried—where **RATS** can find it—but where it's
unlikely to be found by children and pets.



Lollygagger's *TOTAL PARTY KILL* stands tall as a shining example of Chicago's rich punk scene. There's a certain manic energy to the trio here, and it just comes across amazingly well in tracks like "My Boss Is A Dick" and "Sick Semper" that just makes you want to start a moshpit right on the spot, wherever you are, whenever you are.

I had the pleasure of seeing them play live in June, and that energy translates right back on stage and three-fold even. Matt's explosive vocals and guitar work both in person and on *TOTAL PARTY KILL* tend to be the driving force behind the live performances to me, not to say that Michael and Kinsey are behind on any means. Michael's drum work is a force to be reckoned with, and even more so live. Especially on tracks like "Liar's Club." And Kinsey's bass work on "Clown Car" is absolutely nothing short of astounding.

All this amounts to an album or, instead, a collection of songs, as stated on the Bandcamp page, as more than a few of these songs have appeared on other Lollygagger projects, albeit they are different recordings. Having listened quite thoroughly to the band's other work, I can say that *TOTAL PARTY KILL* has the best versions of those songs to date.

As for the band's sound itself, it's a nice hardcore punk sound, angling a bit towards crossover thrash. So fans of both hardcore and thrash metal may find themselves at home here.

And how can I not talk about that album artwork? Based off of iconic rat posters found in alleyways across Chicago, the band puts its heritage front and center. And this really makes for a memorable and iconic album. If you get a vinyl copy, I highly recommend you check the liner notes for your free "colonic irrigation."

LOLLYGAGGER
TOTAL PARTY KILL

(2022)

FLUMMOX SOUTHERN PROGRESS

(2024)

Flummox has managed to deliver what is a strong contender for my Album of the Year. Filled front to back with all the prog-metal goodness that Flummox has become known for and taken even a step further, cranking that all up to eleven.

It's really nice to have new Flummox material in 2025, especially given the state of the world. (Much the same reason why *Saviors* by Green Day worked for me as well as it did) Alyson Blake Dellinger's songwriting does not shy away from being blunt and honest when tackling current affairs and as current affairs evolve, so do these songs. The one I can point the most towards is the opening track: "What We're in For". Not just a wonderfully melodramatic way to open an album, but a warning for what is happening to the world at large.

Everything we've come to expect from Flummox is here. Face-melting meandering guitar solos, catchy riffs and bouncy basswork. If I had to pick a favorite song on the album it's somewhere between "Always Something Going Down" and "Coyote Gospel". The first of those is probably one of the more accessible songs on the album and from Flummox at large while "Coyote Gospel" is an 8-minute epic about the evils of Christian nationalism. They also managed to get Jason Marsden as the preacher here, known for his role as Max Goof in *A Goofy Movie*. He does an absolutely wonderful job selling the role of a shitty southern preacher.

There's not really anything bad here in this album and it has something for every metal fan. If I absolutely had to nit pick, it's that I feel that the balancing on Dellinger's voice could be better in some songs. Sometimes she gets a bit drowned out by the rest of the band. This is in no ways a deal breaker for me because everyone here is giving it their absolute all. Mobarry's guitar work, Pfiefer's drums, Peck's keys, McCutcheon's guitarwork, and of course Dellinger's bass and vocals. Everyone gets a chance to shine and it's face-melting.





Hyperpop always feels like the most anachronistic musical genre to commit to physical media. Yet, as trans electronic artist MaryMary!’s debut EP MY HEART LIKE A SNOWGLOBE FULL OF BLOOD wound its way through my tape player, I couldn’t help but appreciate the layers of static texture added by the mastering process (or the quality of the tape player, or both).

Named for the first three songs, this EP is a series of love letters, “complete with all of the bliss, anxiety, heartache, and excitement that comes with,” as the artist puts it on the EP’s Bandcamp listing. And she delivers, bringing noise and synth influences from across the genre spectrum. “my stupid heart” is a solid dance pop track with synth-modulated vocals, while “full of blood” utilizes breakbeats and a pulsing bass line to bring the listener into the uncertain pains and aches of love. And in between, on “like a snowglobe,” guest vocalist Sofia C-P croons out a ballad over piano tones as synth chirps paint the sky pastel technicolors.

MaryMary! brings a commitment to love, to always pick oneself back up, as the humorous track title “tubthumping pt. 2” might imply. This track in particular distinctly shifts the tone of the EP, pulling synthwave to the forefront, a grooving, slower tempo with brass supporting in the background. The artist repeats, “we won’t go there,” an ambiguous promise, but one made with certainty. A tribute, a song about a song, itself an offer to the subject/listener, that this love will not end with a whimper. The bass hits like a concussive force by the end, impressing itself upon you, not soon to be forgotten or left behind.

And sealing the entire thing is a glorious, thrumming outro, with only three repeated words, “I love you.” And this core of her music rings through every dance beat, every bit of noisy distortion, and every low wave of reverb, making this EP an incredible addition to any lovelorn collection out there.

-LORE

MARYMARY!
MY STUPID HEART LIKE A SNOWGLOBE FULL OF BLOOD

(2024)

THE BEACH BOYS LOVE YOU

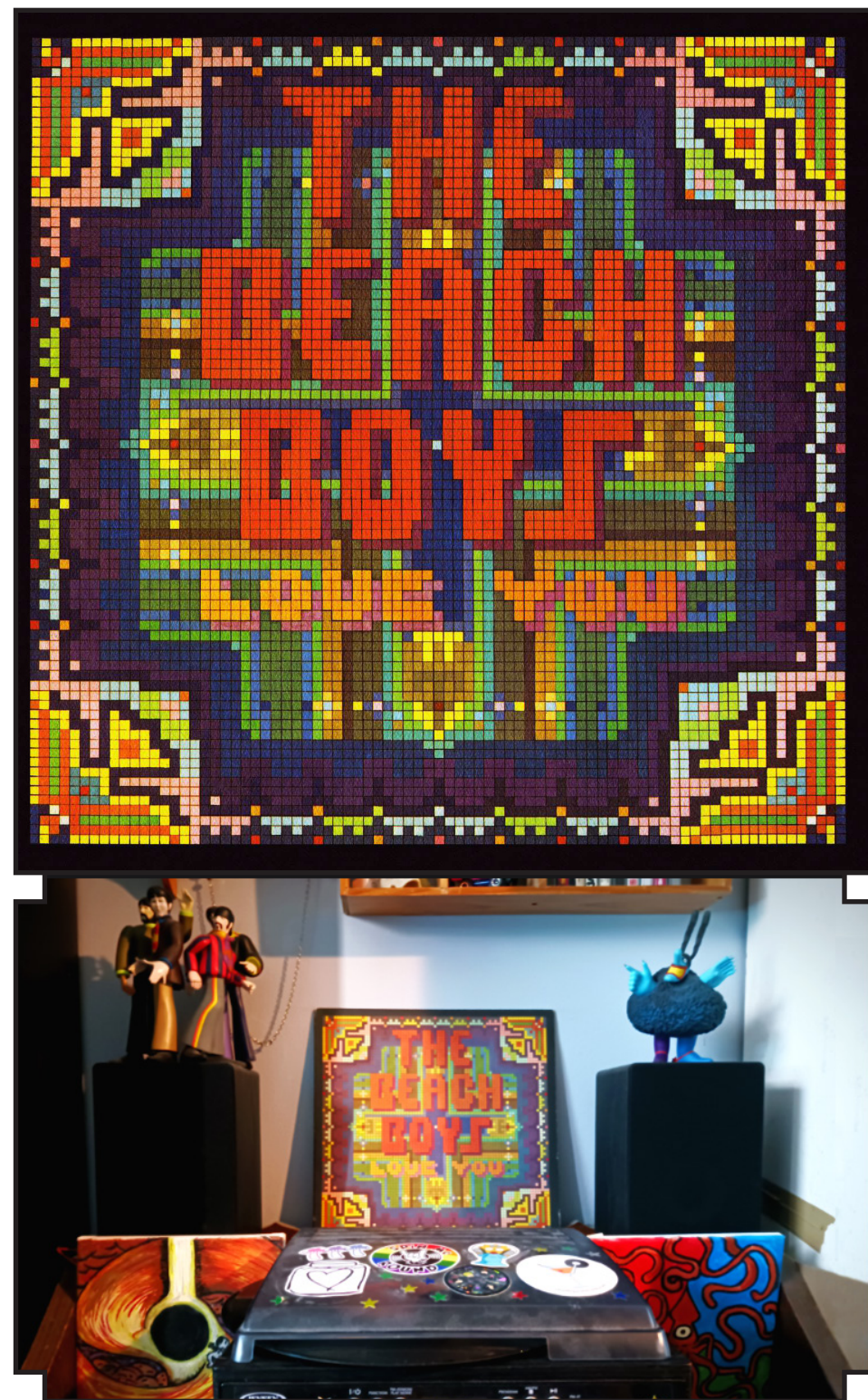
For as long as I can remember, The Beach Boys have had a substantial presence in my life. Their *Sounds of Summer* compilation was in rotation on my MP3 player when I was little, and *Pet Sounds* was an extremely important album for expanding my music taste. Around a year ago, though, many of my friends were taking deep dives into The Beach Boys' discography. Not to be the odd one out, I explored their 70s records. And while I found many great albums through that, my favorite of the bunch was *Love You*.

If you're not already familiar with this album, throw all pre-conceived notions out the window. This album is unlike any other Beach Boys record up to that point. While it does have some elements of The Beach Boys of yore, such as their signature harmonies, it's synth heavy, minimally produced, and might be off-putting on first listen. It's an album you need to live with and accept as is. Lyrically, it can be a little creepy. Like on "Roller Skating Child", an innocent song about Roller Skating with your daughter... and then you get hit with the chorus, and "I Wanna Pick You Up" where the narrator compares their partner to an infant. There are some sillier songs here, too. Including but not limited to "Johnny Carson", a tribute to The Tonight Show host - "Ding Dang", a minute-long interpretation of the traditional song "Shortenin' Bread" - and "Solar System", a tune contemplating if you could find a Martian wife.

The highlights of this album for me are the rockin' opener "Let Us Go on This Way", the ode to living in the moment "Good Time", and my favorite Beach Boys song, "Let's Put Our Hearts Together" - a beautiful duet between Brian Wilson and his then wife Marilyn. Despite Brian's harsh vocals on the song, I will stand by it being the sweetest thing he's ever written.

In the end, is *Love You* for everyone? Definitely not. But I do think it is worth a listen if you like The Beach Boys or oddball records! Rest In Peace, Brian Wilson. You were the best to ever do it.

-PATRICK



(1977)

ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK

ladies in lavender

Original Music by Nigel Hess Violin Joshua Bell



Heya, Eels here. For this Stacks guest review, I will be looking at the *Ladies in Lavender Motion Picture Soundtrack* for CD release by Sony Classical. Wide lens: this is an emotional classical suite for a movie I've never even heard of, starring Dame Maggie Smith and Dame Judi Dench.

As I listened to this score, I tried to imagine the faces on the cover of the album: who were they to the story he was telling? Who was represented by the singing instruments? There were a couple of lovely duets early on between the featured violinist Joshua Bell and a much more timid clarinet, were they introductions to the characters? Who was the drama in the surrounding orchestra - was it the scenery I could not see? Who was Olga? Who was Andrea? Ultimately, the story unfolded within the music itself and was enough to capture me throughout the album, having absolutely no idea what was going on visually - an accomplishment when a score can tell a story apart from the actual film. What started as a joke review became quite real as I'm secretly a great enjoyer of classical music. My top picks being French composers Saint-Saens and Chopin, for their drama, for the swelling orchestra and beautiful melodies and, most importantly, sense of humor; Hess nailed all of that in this soundtrack.

While some of the tracks follow a very linear story in tone and melody through violin and backing, the departure tracks are the real standouts: I would absolutely mosh to track 10 Zabawa Weselna (Polish Dance) followed by the tonal heart-stab that is track 11. The reprise of the earlier duet solidified the story he told in track 14 was through recreating the characters through violin; Joshua playing every violinist's dream role: the emotions of Dame Maggie Smith. The original plan was to pull elements from the albums I review into my future work and if I can pull even an inch of talent and grace weaving a throughline in the human (read:British) experience from Nigel Hess' soundtrack, I'll be alright.

-EELS

NIGEL HESS AND JOSHUA BELL
LADIES IN LAVENDER

(2005)

Marc with a C is back with a new album: Steamed Hams. I had the chance to talk with him about this new album and adventures in songwriting.



Why the title “Steamed Hams”?

I’m historically a pretty big fan of The Simpsons, and that’s the name of an infamous sketch where a premise is introduced, and gets further and further away from the initial point hilariously. I’ve worn shirts to celebrate the sketch for years, but somewhere early in the process of when this became “an album” rather than “a project” in my eyes? I realized that a lot of what I was writing for the album was trying to dig back to an original point, an original premise, and trying to figure out where things went awry, and who chose to obscure it, and what their motives would be. It hit me that no matter which way I tried to explain any of it, if I could use the steamed hams sketch as a reference point, someone in the room would get where I was coming from. Plus, it’s just a good name.

Steamed Hams is a lot sonically different from what you’ve done before. Were there any specific influences that led you to that sound, musical or otherwise?

Certainly! There’s a lot at play, but the two biggest factors are likely that I’m no longer making albums while playing constant in-person live shows, so it gives me more time with equipment already set up, and I can just try an idea if time allows. The equally important factor is that I got an electronic drum kit that mimics a lot of pretty famous drum kits, so I wanted to see how far I could push “tones that don’t really belong to Marc With a C”, and how much I’d have to modify them until they fit. There’s one patch on the kit that sounds like the drum tones from Janet Jackson’s Rhythm Nation album, and running that through a fuzzbox really excited me. The tones might be new to my albums, but it’s in line with my history of using technology as improperly as possible without setting anything or anyone on fire, hopefully.

What song(s) do you think will hit listeners the hardest?

Ooooh, that’s hard to answer. I’m a terrible judge of that type of thing. If you relate to the subject matter hinted at in “899” or “Get It Right The First Time”, I’d imagine that’ll be quite an emotional ride. Meanwhile, I hope that the self-discovery and self-acceptance I’ve tried to make very clear in the running order hits those very same people in a positive way. I’ve found that I do the best at this type of situation when I’ve made something I believe in, and then let go of it, letting listeners decide the importance. Right this second, as we talk, the album isn’t out and it arguably belongs to me. Once it’s out, the experiences that it’ll create won’t belong to me, rather the listener. I hope I’ve done right by them.

Members of your Patreon have gotten to listen to some of these songs in their working stages, how has the feedback helped shape your work?

I’m glad you asked! While I’d anticipated that I could finish the album somewhere around January of 2025 while I’d instead planned to do it longer -- I basically worked faster than I planned -- and a few listeners asked me to go a bit longer. Some of the things that really, really crown the album for me came from what was created after being asked to keep going a bit. Some say I need an editor, but that’s proof I just need the excuse to create at times! My existing listeners very much made this album right alongside me.

What's your favorite thing out of all the products mentioned in "Buy Something"?

Ironically, I don't have much experience with nearly any products listed in the chorus! I do love some alone time with a sweet cassette walkman, and I'm just fond of the phrase "Orange fuckin' Slice".

Some of these songs appeared on your demo project FOR OCTOBER, how did that project influence Steamed Hams?

Endlessly. The pile of demos called FOR OCTOBER were me writing my way out of a writing rut -- there were some particular chord patterns I couldn't break out of using, as the last few albums had been part of a trilogy. My hands kept defaulting to that type of writing, so I had to give myself a new bedrock of "no, here's other paths you can take", and that kicked off a pretty prolific situation. I don't think Steamed Hams would exist as an album with having done (adnd [sic] received great feedback on) FOR OCTOBER.

You've been making music for a long time and have a pretty prolific career, how has your approach to making an album changed?

It changes with every album. This was a case where I'd planned to make 12 singles, and that was "a project". When I started noticing intersecting themes, I couldn't get out of thinking of it as an album. In Phase 1, I was pretty constantly thinking about whatever album I'd make next. This time, I wasn't even trying to make one! 25 years in, and the best part is that I don't have to make anything else ever again if I don't want to, because I've done what I ultimately set out to do. However, I've never had more time to focus on the actual content and the production of the Phase II albums, and I think they're better for it overall. I suppose a difference is that increasingly after the Flowers For Analog album, I'd been thinking "I don't have to do this if I don't want to" if I hit a speedbump with creating, and that's a total 180 from how I once treated these things. And after producing some albums for and with The Left Joins, having some differing approaches from other creators, and seeing their ability to walk away from frustrating moments rather than letting it overtake them has been priceless to any process for me.



Marc with a C's new album, Steamed Hams releases on November 14th, 2025 on Digital, Vinyl, CD, and Cassette from Needlejuice Records.

Marc's a bit of an odd fellow, but I must say, he steams a good ham.

***This Issue:
Don't Matter What Goes Up...
Couple 'a Dames
Bloody, Lovelorn, Hyper pop
Hello Clancy
I SMELL A RAT
Brian Wilson Loves You!
Marc's Regional Dialect***

Rattleback Records in Chicago, IL is featured on this issue's cover. If you're in Andersonville, you should stop by!

Lennon McCrea (She/Her/They/Them)
Chicago 2023
zinesbylennon.neocities.org

STACKS