

those punks in the Black Lips what distortion pedals are for, while the white noise-blitzed "Sad Transmission" imagines a '50s sock-hop at an art school on Mars. If you thought you knew exactly where the Raveonettes were coming from, get ready for a revelation. (VICE: vicerecords.com) *Mike Usinger*

ZOX

★★★★☆

Line In The Sand

Just make sure you're on the right side.

In an age where it's almost impossible to be musically unique, Zox somehow manage to pull it off. *Line In The Sand* further cements this as truth, as the swagger of the band's violin-infused reggae rock is undeniably satisfying. Singer John Zox slithers his way through any tempo or structure with a definite confidence; on "When The Rain Comes Down Again," he affirms those talents in spades. As Zox croons, "And it's strange to wish for the clouds in the pouring rain" over a combination of shimmering chord progressions and somber violin, it's a moment of real, honest perfection. "The Wait (Part II)" is an earnest, acoustic effort that gives the record a change in pace, allowing Zox to show their musical strength exists at any speed. (SIDEONEDUMMY: sideonedummy.com) *Jordan Rogowski*

GOD FIRES MAN

ALBUM:

*A Billion
Balconies
Facing The Sun*

RATING:



ROCKS LIKE:

Muse's *Absolution*

Instruction's *God Doesn't Care*

My Bloody Valentine's *Lovesees*

DON'T STARE DIRECTLY INTO YOUR SPEAKERS.

New York City has become a somewhat inhospitable place for bands during the past 10 years, and surely the members of God Fires Man can remember more vibrant times there. Perhaps that's why they toured the U.K. after releasing their first EP last year instead of making the good ol' U.S.A. their proving ground. Nonetheless, Arthur Shepherd (ex-Errortype:11/Instruction), Joseph Grillo (ex-Garrison/Gay For Johnny Depp), Drew Thomas (ex-Into Another/Walking Concert) and John Wilkinson are ready to put their whole foot forward—and man, do they have a loud foot. Taking cues from Muse and subtle instruction from Smashing Pumpkins, *A Billion Balconies Facing The Sun* is relentless in its quest to suffocate you with melody and fuzz. In a whirlwind of guitar-driven melodrama, their first full-length pairs substantive lyrical content with over-the-top, often howling instrumentation; the result sounds studio-huge and skillfully

crafted, if not occasionally overstated or too classically "alterna." (Even the ubiquitous shoegaze feel on this record can't stop some of these vocals from sounding like a Puddle Of Creed.) Produced by Ethan Dussault (Cave In) and Brian Virtue (Deftones), *Balconies* contains some moments of surprising and unfortunate anonymity, but still zigs and zags with enough precision to clown most other rock bands. (IN DE GODT: indegotrecordings.com) *Ronen Kauffman*

floor. From the bombastic opening blast of "Nothing Further From The Truth," first and foremost, God Or Julie go for bigness and warmth, and usually succeed, with soaring guitars and subtle volume swells under every hook. It's an enveloping experience, although the performances don't always match the improved sonics. While never short on volume, Jon Paul Johnson's vocals gradually become monotonous emo cartoons that constantly break in the same place, resulting in a gloopy generic tenderness in songs that otherwise sound pretty sharp. (TRASHBOX: godorjulie.com) *Rick Flintlock*

both melodic flights and no-wave skronk. Bixler-Zavala's vocals are as strident as ever ("Goliath") and guitarist Rodriguez-Lopez is clearly at the top of his game ("Ouroboros"). These 12 tracks of blistering post-hardcore, propulsive Latino-funk jams and progressive rock segues, peppered with dalliances in neo-psychedelica and abstract electronica, convey a tungsten-hard truth: The Mars Volta have created the first great record of 2008. (STRUMMER/UNIVERSAL) *Jason Pettigrew*

BOB MOULD

★★★★½

District Line

Hüsker Dü legend proves six strings outweigh 64-bit processing.

It's interesting that six years after Bob Mould released his electronica-laden *Modulate*—which seemed to polarize fans with its first digitally generated note—the marketing material promoting his newest affair, *District Line*, clearly signposts promises of plenty of guitars. Fortunately, as *Line* finds Mould recording with not only his Fender in the foreground, but also with a full band backing him for the first time in a decade. In addition, *Line* features an experienced cast (Mould's greatest ensemble since Sugar), which includes Fugazi drummer Brendan Canty and Verbows Jason Narducy on bass. Regrettably, Mould couldn't steer entirely clear from the

synths and computer trickery, but there are plenty of stellar guitar-rock cuts, including "Very Temporary," "Return To Dust" and the *Copper Blue*-esque "The Silence Between Us." The classic Mould you've sought is (mostly) back. (ANTI: anti.com) *Waleed Rashid*

THE RAVEONETTES

★★★★☆

Lust Lust Lust

Danish imports soak up the sound of the Big Apple.

No one likes being pigeonholed, which explains why *Lust Lust Lust* finds the Raveonettes working overtime to reinvent themselves. In danger of being written off as a European duo who sound like the Everly Brothers banging morphine with the Jesus And Mary Chain, they've responded by unleashing their inner NYC no-wavers. Consider yourself warned: This third album from vocalist/guitarist Sune Rose Wagner and bassist/vocalist Sharrn Foo is noticeably short on *Psychocandy*-flavored bubblegum rave ups. The Raveonettes—who've officially abandoned Scandinavia for the Big Apple—are suddenly noisier than old-school Sonic Youth and every bit as menacing as the Velvet Underground circa '68. In addition to fusing dream-fever trip-hop with film-noir Americana, "Aly, Walk With Me" shows

THE MARS VOLTA

★★★★★

The Bedlam In Goliath

Forget Radiohead: The Martians set the bar around here.

If you couldn't stay awake through the Mars Volta's previous disc, *Amputechture*, don't feel bad. Instead, revel in the majesty that is *The Bedlam In Goliath* because band chairmen Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodriguez-Lopez have created a masterpiece that is the true follow-up to their debut, *Deloused In The Comatorium*. The key word here is energy; New drummer Thomas Pridgen is positively relentless ("Askepios") and sax player Adrian Terrazas Gonzales threatens to blow his eyes through his reed, offering

SOUNDS

AS TALL AS LIONS

★★★★½

Into The Flood EP

(TRIPLE CROWN; triplecrownrecords.com)

WHO? One of AP's 100 Bands You Need To Know In 2007 cap off their banner year with five new songs.

SOUNDS LIKE? Jazz-influenced piano balladry ("We're The Ones That Keep You Warm At Night") and epic rhythm section workouts (the title track), all with Daniel Nigro's gorgeous falsetto vocals.

HOW IS IT? Goddamn, just when we thought this band couldn't get any better, they one-up themselves. Give us more, please!

ROCKS LIKE: JEFF BUCKLEY, MUSE
THE VELVET TEEN

THE MAINE

★★★★☆

The Way We Talk EP (FEARLESS; fearlessrecords.com)

WHO? Fearless Records' newest golden boys who have only been a band since January 2007.

SOUNDS LIKE? Incredibly sugary pop-punk with a huge emphasis on the "pop."

HOW IS IT? While their hair is über-annoying and their clothing is louder than your average Every Time I Die show, we can't deny the Maine know how to write catchy pop songs (see the title track for proof).

ROCKS LIKE: THE STARTING LINE, MAYDAY PARADE
CUTE IS WHAT WE AIM FOR

SCANNED