

MUSIC REVIEW



reviews by Tal Rosenberg

EARLIMART

Hymn and Her
[Majordomo]

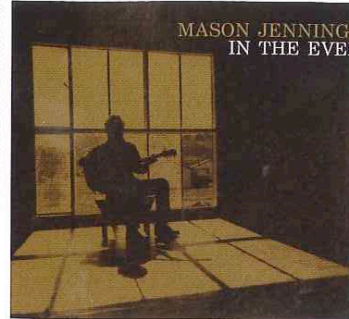
★★★★

EARLIMART

HYMN AND HER



Ostensibly, *Hymn and Her* signifies religious undertones, but the pronunciation is meant literally. Earlimart's (the L.A. duo of Aaron Espinoza and Ariana Murray) songs deal with the everyday struggles and pleasures of relationships, and the subjects are as straightforward as the music. Eschewing the quirkiness, muddled experimentation, or gravitas that plagues most contemporary indie rock records, *Hymn and Her* simply contains twelve songs built upon Espinoza's whispered, strained voice (reminiscent of Elliott Smith), shuffling drums and slow tempos. The conservative instrumentation and unvarnished music is as humble as the band's hopes: to find their place in the world - and possibly in someone else's life.



Mason Jennings
In the Ever
[American]

All too often people complain about the belabored nature of singer/songwriter albums—how the studied intensity of most of these performers tends to mire them in their own self-seriousness. Mason Jennings, moving from Isaac Brock's record label to Jack Johnson's, effaces any distinction between slapdash jubilation and slick professionalism. On *In the Ever*, though Jennings' songs are as ramshackle and whimsical as Beck's early demos, they're under a surface that's clean more than polished, a distinction that prevents this from being adult-like and assists its charms.

★★★★



The Herbaliser
Same As if Never Was
[K7]

At the outset of The Herbaliser's ninth album, when horns blast off on a funk-filled runway, one might question whether this is the work of a different band. Incorporating two touring backup musicians and a female vocalist (the dazzling Jessica Darling) into their repertoire, The Herbaliser switch their dynamic by becoming a full-fledged instrumental quintet. But the biggest change is their sound, moving from the downtempo stylings of trip-hop to the gritty textures and booming sonics of '70s funk ("On Your Knees"), exotic film scores ("Amores Bongos") and instrumental hip-hop ("Blackwater Drive").

★★★★



Daedelus
Love to Make Music to
[Ninja Tune]

Sometimes impatience provides rewards in unexpected places. California native Daedelus has the attention span of a housefly, never content on sustaining a basic 4/4 or coaxing his listener through repetition. Oftentimes his songs will shift directions fast enough to make your nose bleed, and just when you're comfortable in a smooth melodic phrase, he drops a shriek that ruffles your feathers. But on *Love to Make Music to* this works to his advantage, displaying an artist juggling so many concepts that the circus act becomes more engaging than the ideas.

★★★★



Icy Demons
Miami Ice
[Obey Your Brain]

On their 2003 album, experimental collective Icy Demons succeeded in making their complex musical structures palatable to a wider audience by adhering to traditional pop arrangements. *Miami Ice* finds them drifting further towards the middle, and perhaps for the better. Occasionally evoking the squelches, glottal voicing, and goofiness of mid-'90s Ween, Icy Demons still manage to forge territory all their own, in songs that curl, bend and glide organically. The latter movement is the most crucial, as their flirtations with world music provide them with a cushion for their weirdness.

★★★★★

RZA
as Bobby Digital

Digi Snacks
[Koch]

★★★★★



Digi Snacks might just be the best thing RZA, under the guise of Bobby Digital, has done in a decade: an album stocked full of esoteric references, shadowy characters and, naturally, an arsenal of wildly inventive beats. Produced entirely by RZA—except for an appearance behind the boards by David Banner—nothing on *Digi Snacks* is anywhere near predictable. But then, how could it be? This is Bobby Digital we're talking about, and he remains in character with bizarrely awesome lines ("When I was young, I slept with a battery on my tongue/So when I spit, the impact had the sting of a stun gun") and reliably ace production.