

:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

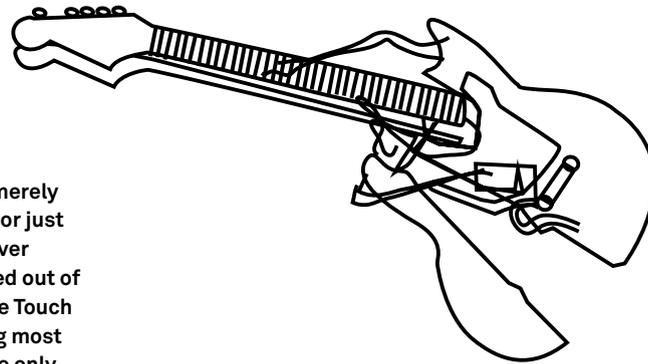
ALL PIGS MUST DIE!

Did I get your attention? To mangle a Bukowski quote to suit my needs, “I wouldn’t say I hate cops, it’s just I feel a lot better when they aren’t around.” With most people now possessing cameras in their pocket, police forces are being kept in check a bit more, but not too long ago, the only defence you had against police oppression and violence was protesting in numbers, organizing locally and good ol’ tubthumping.

In the ’80s, you just weren’t a tried and true hardcore band unless you had at least two anti-cop songs squeezed into your 30-song, 15-minute set. One of my favourite Canadian hardcore records of the ’80s was *Born Too Soon* by local hardcore legends S.C.U.M. — who indeed took the Montreal police force to task as part of their anti-cop crusade. Originally released on Montreal label Psyche Industry at the tail end of 1985, this absolute classic MTLHC record gets a gussied up vinyl re-mastering by killer reissue California label Porterhouse. This new version is absolutely crushing and is guaranteed to rattle the windows with newfound gusto.

1985 was a rough year for hardcore as most bands merely stepped up the tempos into an unrecognizable blur or just aped metal riffage within the newly hatched crossover genre. Within one year, the heart had just been ripped out of hardcore. By ’85, Swans, Sonic Youth and most of the Touch and Go roster were clearly ahead of the pack leaving most hardcore bands to just pick up the pieces. One of the only unquestionable “hardcore” records that could still remain fresh while retaining hardcore’s touchstones, heart and principles was S.C.U.M.’s *Born Too Soon*. Even decades later, this record is positively seething with white hot rage, its blood still pumping strong. S.C.U.M.’s name was a clear thorn in the side of the MUC (Montreal Urban Community police, as it was then called), whose insignia was bastardized by the band. When singer Anthony Mark screams, “It’s war between us and the M.U.C./cops hate us and won’t let us be,” it still cuts right to the marrow — take that, Ice Cube. The battle against cop oppression continues with searing shrapnel like “Exit Death” and “Pyramid Mall Blues,” while other ragers take aim on drug dependency and the good old hardcore staples of war and religion. If you’re looking for politically charged, call-to-arms hardcore, this is as good as it gets.

But as barbed and righteous as the lyrics are — does the album really rock? In short, fuck yeah. S.C.U.M. absolutely obliterate with a mid-tempo attack that levels everything in its path like a Panzer tank. S.C.U.M. was not a band looking over its shoulder at the thrashers of the day, preferring to



remain true to themselves. This is why *Born Too Soon* still sounds as fresh today as it did almost 40 years ago. In a ballsy song sequence move, the band truly challenges with record opener “Home Away From Home,” a magnum opus that has more to do with prog rock than garden variety *Maximum RockNRoll* spew. Truthfully I still think their skater anthem “Pool Hunt” would’ve made more sense on the cutting room floor, but outside of that, this record should provide the perfect soundtrack to your next cop-car torching.

Get S.C.U.M.’s *Born Too Soon* exclusively at Sound Central (4486 Coloniale) in Montreal.

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Album reviews



Erik Fines, *Country Ghost* (Baby Horse)

It’s hard to determine why the outlaw country sound never died, but goddamn are we thankful it didn’t. Throwing his own mysterious and catchy spin on the now-evolving genre, the new EP by Montreal’s Erik Fines at times sounds like it was inspired

by Marty Robbins’ *Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs* or Waylon Jennings’ work in the ’70s. Though Erik Fines has never lived the outlaw country lifestyle, he and his band are excellent at musically summarizing why we continue to love it on this short EP. The forlorn and sentimental storytelling, the saloon-piano crescendos, the upright bass riffs, the twang of the lap steel guitar, the acoustic live-off-the-floor chemistry of the band, the heartbreaking vocal harmonies that you can’t help but sing along with — all of this is heard on *Country Ghost* and it’s simply gorgeous. 9/10 Trial Track: “Country Ghost” (Stephan Boissonneault)



Kelela, *Raven* (Warp)

It’s been a long five and a half years for a follow-up to Kelela’s debut LP, *Take Me Apart*, but we’re thrilled to say it was damn well worth it. The D.C. songstress has returned with a vengeance with her sophomore LP *Raven*, and the end result

is an even more cohesive, purposeful and enchanting album than last time around. With dazzling, kaleidoscopic production

that sounds just as dark and watery as the album cover, we hear Kelela and her icy cool voice hitting higher notes than usual on opener “Washed Away” and dabbling effortlessly in U.K. garage on “Contact.” Whether the tempo is turned up (“Bruises”) or slowed all the way down (“Divorce”), *Raven* is the sound of Kelela’s artistry hitting a whole new peak. 9/10 Trial Track: “Contact” (Dave MacIntyre)



Gorillaz, *Cracker Island* (Parlophone/Warner)

Gorillaz are nothing if not vibrant and eclectic, and their eighth album *Cracker Island* delivers on that front yet again. It’s also the sound of Damon Albarn ostensibly correcting course on the chaotic and bloated nature of prior releases like 2017’s

Humanz. Though its first two singles — the title track and “New Gold” — remain among the album’s best moments, the ones they saved for release day were well worth the wait. The elegant, gorgeous Stevie Nicks duet “Oil” is an early contender for song of the year, and the bouncy “Tarantula” and the Bad Bunny-featuring “Tormenta” are also standouts. Some Gorillaz fans may bemoan its glossier pop sheen, but *Cracker Island* is also more focused, concise and spirited than anything they’ve released since *Plastic Beach*. 8.5/10 Trial Track: “New Gold” (Dave MacIntyre)

Patche, *Patche* (popop)

The first few minutes of the debut album by Patche — a new local experimental electronic-krautrock five-piece that pushes the boundaries of modular synthesizers —



feels like taking an elevator in a surrealist dream, as the walls slowly begin to melt, the door opens and the floor disintegrates. It’s a constant stream of sound, synthy melodies, tasty bass lines, motorik drum beats, art rock guitars — like PJ Harvey if she ever jammed with the

musical German collective Popul Vuh, and Brian Eno was the producer. Ultimately, it’s an album to listen to front-to-back if you’re looking for unconventional, multilayered, instrumental music that follows no real roadmap, sometimes jumping into club-ready electro or calm ambient textures. These musicians (members of past and present groups like Lumière, Duu, zouz, Mon Doux Saigneur and Zombie Life Mon Coeur) are highly skilled and some of the sounds they create together are nothing short of extraordinary. 8/10 Trial Track: “Motorik” (Stephan Boissonneault)

Bonnie Trash, *Hail, Hale!* (Hand Drawn Dracula)

The atmosphere on a track by Bonnie Trash (from Guelph, ON) has always been tense, gothic and downright calamitous, and on the new EP *Hail, Hale!*, following up the fantastic debut album *Malocchio* from last year, twin sisters Emmalia and Sarafina Bortolon-Vettor have gone even more nebulous. *Hail, Hale!* consists of only three songs and could be considered a darkwave drone EP, as the lyrics take the backseat and are instead replaced by sinister guitar work, noise synths and an overall nightmarish aura. Of course, the opening single “Shades of You” is Bonnie Trash at their most accessible, with hair-raising lyrics like “I will eat your tongue,” but with a drone-rock groove that any alternative rock fan will enjoy. It’s interesting that the sisters decided to put this song on *Hail, Hale!* because it would have made more sense on *Malocchio* and kind of feels out of place opening this EP. Still, the track could be considered one of Bonnie Trash’s best. 7.5/10 Trial Track: “Shades of You” (Stephan Boissonneault)