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ALBUM REVIEWS

Punisher by Phoebe Bridgers Album Review By Ava Castro

It's no secret that 2020 was the year of Phoebe Bridgers. With her sophomore album *Punisher*'s release being in June, it came at a great time for those who were feeling stagnant during the never-ending lockdown that started back in March. Since June, *Punisher* has gained attention, critical acclaim, and admiration. For the lovers of Bridgers' emo-folk-indie sound, this album checks nearly every box. Being one of my personal favorite albums of the year, this album blends interesting and out-of-the-box lyrics, fresh sounding melodies, and a gorgeous vocal performance. *Punisher* seems to encapsulate the sorrow of loss, the feeling of the mundane, and the bizarre passion of love.

Bridgers has a decent amount of music under her belt; her debut album *Stranger in the Alps* was received well, especially with the success of her song *Motion Sickness*. Bridgers branched out into two separate bands in addition to her solo project: *Better Oblivion Community Center* and *boygenius*. Both albums from these bands expand on her version of indie music, while showcasing her strong voice. What makes *Punisher* stand out from the others is the consistency and creation of a sound that I think is her strongest. In the opening song *DVD Menu*, although just an instrumental, it sets the stage for the eerie yet beautiful songs on the album. *Garden Song* showcases her storytelling. It feels like Bridgers is reflecting on herself, finishing the song with the lyric "I have everything I wanted" while the mood of the song contrasts that message.

Kyoto is one of the star-songs off the album, being listed as one of the best and more successful songs on the album. With its fun and catchy sound, the song is about doubts, boredom, and personal issues but is painted in a way that romanticizes it- that feeling of not coming to terms with things in our lives is familiar to many. *Kyoto* is one of my favorite songs and is super enjoyable from beginning to end. Songs 4-8 explore many emotions through anecdotes, stories and settings created by Bridgers in a way that makes you feel for her, even if you've never experienced something similar. Her songwriting shows, but more noticeably her voice. Paired wonderfully with the instrumentals, her voice displays the pain, hope, and sorrow she sings about.

ICU and *Graceland, Too* stand out due to their magnificent melodies. Those two songs represent the best melody songwriting of the album, having beautiful and striking tunes that feel witty and raw. The album ends with *I Know the End*, which in my opinion is the best song on the album. Being the longest song of the album, it feels like you are experiencing something along with Bridgers in real time. A song literally about the end of the world that ends with screaming, it feels fitting in the year 2020. It feels like three songs in one, but at the same time doesn't feel unnatural at all. To me, the length and changes in the song represent the mindset of someone and what they deem is important as life changes. If you're from America, you may understand how it really encapsulates the aura that is held in the country and neighborhoods here, especially if you're trying to escape it. In my opinion, my only criticism of this album is that it should have been longer! It really is a journey from beginning to end, and makes me very eager for her future projects.



Melee By Dogleg Album Review By Alexander Severtson

Presenting emotion through a medium is one of the most difficult challenges for artists. It requires not only a mastery of form but a deep awareness and understanding of the feelings themselves. Consequently, many attempts fail by being too spurious or reserved. Michigan-based Dogleg, however, has avoided these pitfalls on their debut album, *Melee*, a work of musical bloodletting that is as finely-tuned as it is raw and unrelenting.

Pairing the thrashing intensity of post-hardcore with the naked vulnerability of emo, the record delivers song after song of biting emotional sentiment. It takes the familiar ideas of the latter genre- loss, anguish, and defeat, to name a few- and offers them in a delivery of the former that is so unpolished and fierce any doubt of emotional authenticity is absolutely blown away. Whether it is the fiery immolation in "Prom Hell", the intense rollercoaster that is "Wrist", or the gutting catharsis of "Cannonball", the album never fails to captivate.



This blistering affectability, however, is by no means due to chance. The ability of Dogleg to create a sound that is not only brazen but evocative and coherent is testament to their talent as musicians. Melee is filled with elements that continually establish this prowess. Arguably the most noticeable of these is front-man Alex Stoitsiadis’ vocals which are both tortured and voracious. His throttling energy is perfectly matched by his bandmates’ own fiery performances: Parker Grissom’s ruthless guitar shredding tears at you in unison with drummer Jacob Hanlon’s unbridled drum assaults atop Chase Macinski’s swift and sonorous basslines.

Still, the impressiveness of Melee is not due solely to Dogleg’s ability to play loud and fast. Rather, their restraint of this intensity at all the right times keeps any song, and the record as a whole, from settling into tedious or unmotivated energy. It would have been easy to never let the foot off the gas of the thundering entry of “Kawasaki Backflip” and ride that energy for the entire album. But Dogleg’s refusal to settle instead resulted in a record that keeps listeners excited and anxious for the next track.

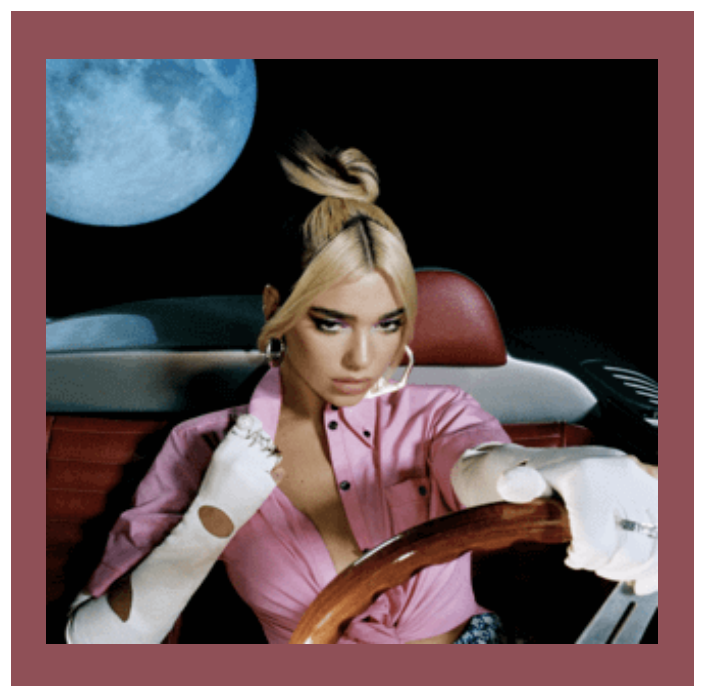
The group’s musical maturity is even further demonstrated by their awareness of their sound’s attitude. They know they are emo and they aptly leave it at just that. No song ever goes deeper than necessary or tries to be anything more than what it is: anthems for ‘punch dancing out our rage’. Even the lyrics limit their dimensionality, coming off direct while still maintaining their gracefulness: “stuck in a time when my mind came out my math// You’re stuck inside my head again, it’s pressing against my skin”. The simplicity of choices like these is, however, not at all uninspiring. Rather, such a seemingly straightforward approach adds so much affectability because there is nothing huge or complex to unpack, it is all there at first listen.

There is a lot of technical work to celebrate on Melee- sharp execution, deft decision-making, effective songwriting. However, what really makes it such a great album is simply its genuine and powerful emotionality. Yes, it is worthwhile to recognize all the backdoor workings of a piece of music, or any art for that matter, but the fact that it can be felt means so much more, especially for this album. Melee is a record that was meant for headbanging at house shows, throwing elbows in pits, and screaming alone in cars, not for being picked apart and critiqued by critics... yet it has succeeded in all of these domains.

Future Nostalgia by Dua Lipa- Album Review Ava Castro

I’ve been a fan of Dua Lipa since 2016, when I saw her live as an opener. I’m so glad I got the chance to see her live before her fame really blossomed. After loving her self-titled album for several years, you can imagine I was eager for the release of her sophomore album, Future Nostalgia. It didn’t disappoint! Released on March 27th, it came out at just the right time for quarantine and it has been on repeat since. In my opinion, Future Nostalgia is nearly a perfect pop album. Although it lacks the variety of one or two ballads/acoustics, I didn’t find a problem with that considering her first album had a couple. Dua bursted out of the hiatus gates blazing, and clearly aware of the masterpiece she worked up. The album makes it irresistible to move or dance, with its groovy instrumentals and incredible vocals.

The album explores energetic and funky rhythms and breathes fresh air into the pop scene. With its broad range, pop as a genre can sometimes tend to lack meaning or have vague lyrics and messages. Pop is sometimes mis-categorized because a good portion of it contains catchy melodies but low artistry. Dua proves this assumption wrong by making an album even pop-skeptics would have to tap their foot to.



This album makes it impossible to sit still with its positive and colorful vibe. Dua's genius combines a slight 80's or retro feel with modern messages and sounds. The album opens with the title track, "Future Nostalgia". This song is one of my favorites, because of its gutsy and slightly haunted sound. It is definitely the most groovy song, and sets the tone for the rest of the album, which doesn't disappoint! "Don't Stop Now" is the first single she released off the album, and attracted lots of attention. "Physical" truly makes you feel like you could be in an 80s workout aerobic video, with its pumped-up tempo and a melody that packs a punch. "Levitating" is my personal favorite song off the album. In my opinion, it's an example of a perfect pop song; it has a catchy melody but variety throughout. The course of the song switches to introduce different melodies and instrumentals, and overall leaves you on a high. It feels magical and dreamy but also energized and electrifying!



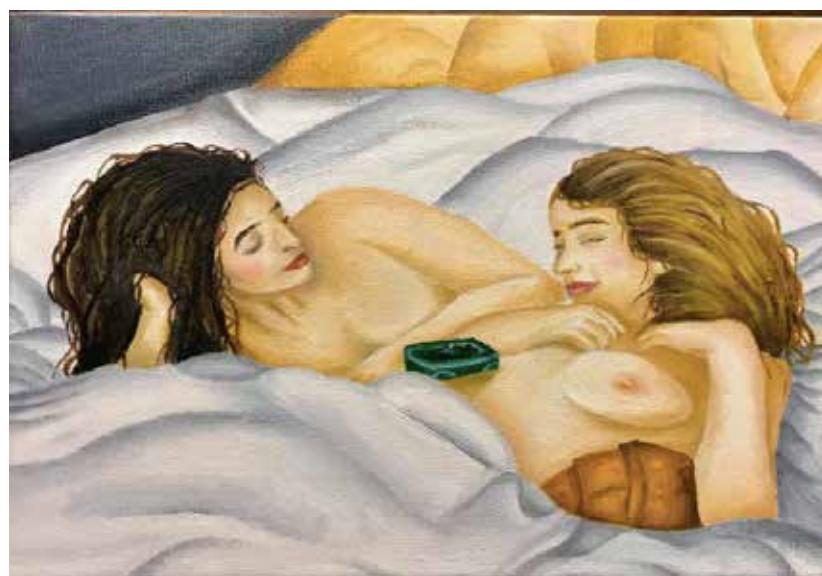
"Break My Heart" will get stuck in your head, with its relatable message yet unique sound. "Boys Will Be Boys" is a powerful song about double standards, although probably my least favorite on the album. It's a good song, but is musically weaker than the rest. I believe most of the effort was put in the lyrics instead, which is definitely understandable. However, sometimes displaying a powerful message obviously is the best way to get it across. In my opinion, the message was very meaningful and Dua showed it accurately through honesty and attention-grabbing lyrics. It's painfully true and important. Some areas of the album do feel a little underdeveloped, but I imagine that is due to Dua's relative short time in the spotlight. Some of the choruses lack a little variety or spark in the lyrics, keeping most of the messages simply stated. A song doesn't need to be intelligent to feel fresh and exciting, but I think she could expand on that in later albums. But like I mentioned before, every single song brings its own importance to the album. Acclaimed for its production, Future Nostalgia received praise due to its unique but seamless use of sound and mixing. Overall, this album was a blessing during these stressful times. Funny, care-free, invigorated, and ballsy, Future Nostalgia solidifies Dua Lipa's importance in the music industry. This album is bold, attention-grabbing, and good-feeling!

ART SUBMISSIONS

Submissions contributed by WUOG members



Submitted By: Alaina Yarboro



Submitted By: Ava Castro

ART SUBMISSIONS

S u b m i s s i o n s c o n t r i b u t e d b y W U O G m e m b e r s



Submitted By: Julianne Akers



Submitted By: Reed Winckler

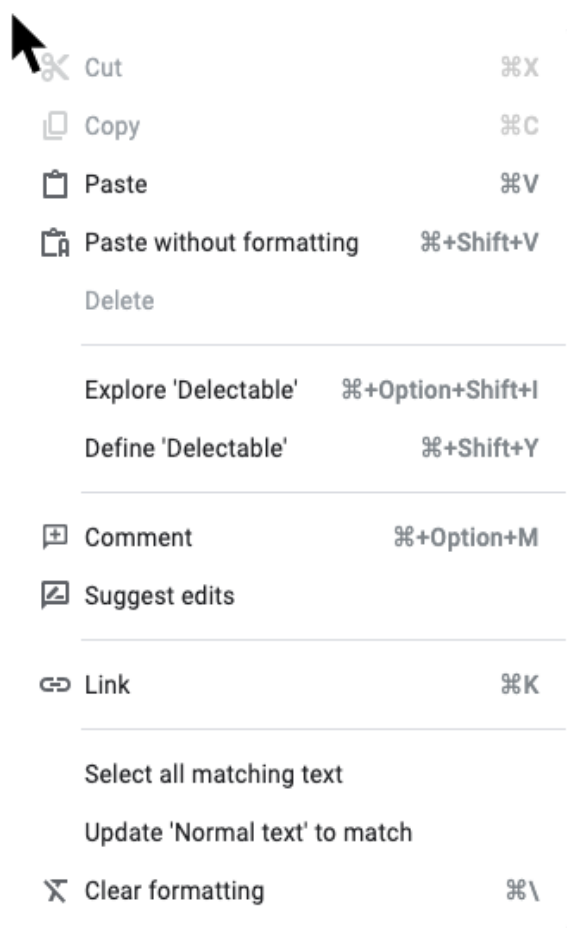


**All Four Works Submitted
By: Ava Castro**

Literary Pieces

Untitled By: Chloe Chloe Grace

You see the silent trees out there, waving in the wind
they knock together quietly, all around the bend
I can see them 'til they hit the hills
And get swallowed by the mist
But I can feel them breathing silently
As they spread upwards, inch by inch
Through foul air and thinning light
They set out and take the skies
So they can crack beneath their soaring weight
And not just rot in the blinding white



Self Portrait at 22 By: Calvin C.

I was sitting there, arms dangling on the floor.
Termites feast on the Heart - rotting as she yearns for her maker.

This moon has birthed an overwhelming flood of chaos.
It sits at the highest point, an unachievable distance.

Anticipation pulsates through my body as if I were a conduit for significance.

I curse the moon for its vacancy;
the observational nature of something so far away.
Perhaps, I too could observe, or maybe god changed his mind.

Literary Pieces

The Secret of Wheels By: Kennon Conner

How distinct:


There is a rumble atop Mt. Delectable,
Where the Panther lay slain by the Lion's hand,
And the trees shake forth what fowl perch to the canopy.
The Keeper of the Secret of Wheels turns but one gaze of many
Unto the flock who search for shepherds in wolves in their weariness
And doff their fleece willingly to stand naked in the biting wind,
Yielding to razored gullets heralded by silvered tongues
And weeps with spinning, gyre eyes for today.
And yet for tomorrow the Keeper smiles,
Knowing.





Pity those blinded who were promised enlightenment;
Pity those shackled in chains forged of their own spirits;
Pity those fearful who steel their hearts with vile ramparts;
For they avert longing irises from the breadth of the Earth,
And refuse the heart's calling lifesong of Joy and Mourning,
And as the charge of mighty Nkuba stood miniscule before the Sun,
So too posture the cries of the afflicted,
And soon will they melt into the
Remembering breath of Love.

Love.



Those wings of ever-softened down
Call out to you still, battered and
Insulted though you have made them be,
And naught but to enfold you do they wish
Above all things material or incorporeal.
Those wings of ever-softened down
Call out to you still.
Embrace them unto yourself
And sing with harmony.


And yet there will be those blinded, shackled, fearful,
Who in their blindness, shacklement, fearfulness,
Embrace not the wings of Love, and in so doing
Imprison his wife within their breasts, refusing
Them a most passionate and primeval rendezvous.
With patience sing to them and call to them and
Welcome them and embrace them with sincerity
When they fall into the plumage, and let
The child of Love and Soul
Enter their hearts
And drink fresh
Of the Earth's breath
And sing with harmony.




-  Cut ⌘X
-  Copy ⌘C
-  Paste ⌘V
-  Paste without formatting ⌘+Shift+V
- Delete

- Explore 'Delectable' ⌘+Option+Shift+I
- Define 'Delectable' ⌘+Shift+Y

-  Comment ⌘+Option+M
-  Suggest edits

-  Link ⌘K

- Select all matching text
- Update 'Normal text' to match

-  Clear formatting ⌘\

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

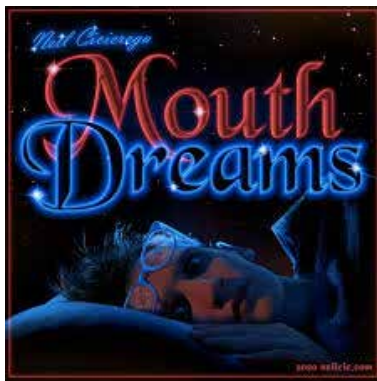
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Touche Amore
Lament

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Mouth Dreams

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Women In Music Pt. 3

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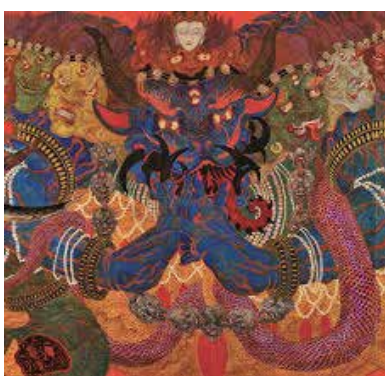
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Protomartyr
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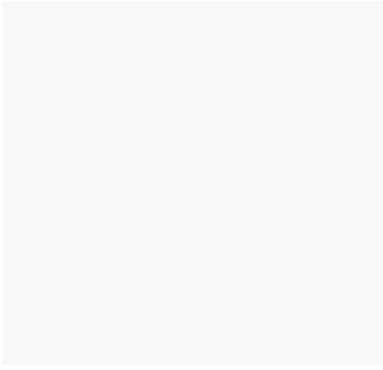
King Krule
Man Alive!

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Empty Country
Empty Country

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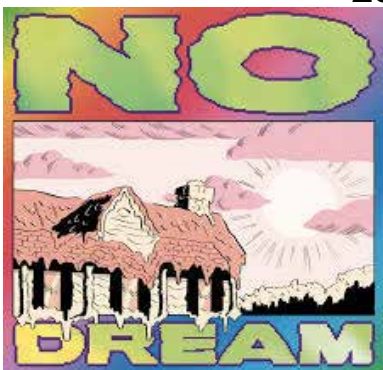


Freddie Gibbs
Alfredo

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

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Jeff Rosenstock
NO DREAM

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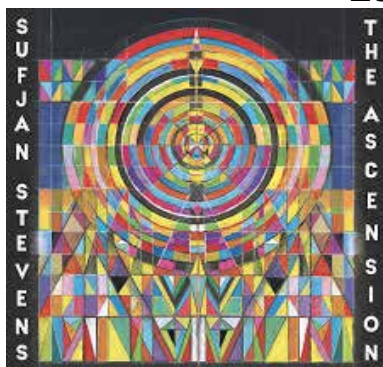
The Garden
Kiss My Super Bowl Ring

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100 geecs
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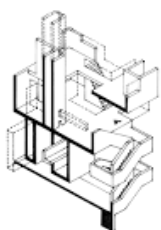
Jessie Ware
What's Your Pleasure

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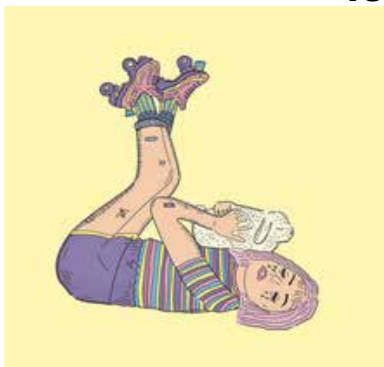
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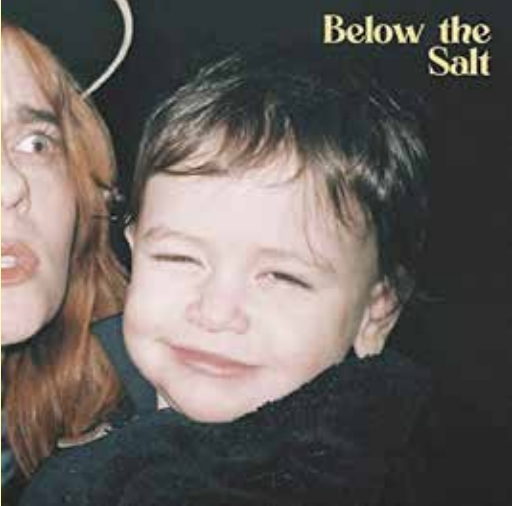


Dua Lipa
Future Nostalgia

ALBUMS OF
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ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

10

Dan Deacon Mystic Familiar



Mystic Familiar is the most ecstatic album of the year. It is the album that has brought me the most joy in its sound and is the one album that makes me want to get up and do things, which is certainly an impressive feat.

Mystic Familiar carries an energy about it that is electric. Each of the first “three” tracks slowly build up into these massive, hypnotic, overwhelming seas of sounds. This album makes me want to dance in ways that make me not embarrassed to be dancing. As much as it is an impossibility right now, I implore you to see Dan Deacon live, because everyone else will be unafraid to be dancing in the same way. In fact, Dan Deacon has the most exhilarating and all-encompassing live show I have ever been to, from audience participation, to precisely awkward stage banter, to the immaculate lighting that of course is choreographed and deeply intertwined with his on stage

But beyond and under the pure dancing energy this album puts off, there is a gentle tenderness that weaves its way through each song. It’s like each song starts off as a hug, and then at whatever point he deems it best, slowly tightens that hug until you’re really squeezing each other, and you can feel the vibrations that both participants are giving off. Sometimes this can be halfway through a song, or it can ebb and flow like in the thirteen minute “Arp” saga, or it can be an immediate and cathartic release, like in “Sat by a Tree.” Sometimes, like in most of the songs on the back half of this record, he doesn’t do this at all and is happy to just give you a nice hug.

Dan’s instrumentation is pristine and every time I hear a new song of his, I’m mad I didn’t come up of a way to make this music first. He uses a midi piano like an impossible player piano in the opening track, “Become a Mountain,” and cellos swirl in Bach-like circles in “Weeping Birch.” Every element fits in sync with every other element, no matter how plentiful.

This album makes me happy, in a time when few other things do. And for that I am grateful.

- Joseph Mullen

9

Dogleg Melee



Dogleg really came out of nowhere this year, huh? After dropping an EP or two in 2016, their debut LP *Melee* made a massive splash in the punk blogosphere. With its 35 minutes of pure cathartic energy that land somewhere between *Rites of Spring* and Dookie-era Green Day, it’s not hard to see why. Their driving aggression, abstract lyricism, and linear song structures set them apart from other DIY emo bands, but musically Dogleg doesn’t bring anything to the post hardcore table that a band like Jawbreaker or even Meet Me In St. Louis hasn’t done before. The real highlight of the album is Alex Strotsiadis’s vocals: He sings, yelps, and screams here like his life depends on every word. You can hear how therapeutic performing is for him, especially in moments like the manic “was I good enough?” refrain at the end of “Prom Hell” or, well, all of highlight “Fox”. Other standout tracks include the bouncy “Headfirst” and dynamic closer “Ender”. Dogleg never takes their foot off the throttle for the whole album, which leads to things feeling a bit same-y, but regardless it’s a remarkably well-crafted and performed debut with tons of energy, and I’m excited to see where the young band goes next.

-Will Morris

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

8

Peach Pit You and Your Friends



Peach Pit's sophomore album, *You and Your Friends*, is filled with bedroom pop meets surf rock melodies that are not shy to synth and distorted guitar tracks, along with Neil Smith's soft yet assertive vocals that define the album. As it navigates the complexities of love in your 20s, heartbreak, and loneliness, the album seemed to arrive just when the world needed it most, being released in early April 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of us were scared, alone, and preparing for the unknown, while *You and Your Friends* arrived to explore these exact feelings and with a story to tell. "Black Licorice" delves into the idea of being unwanted and alone, something felt by many during quarantine this year. This emotion is continued in the slow and somber "Camilla, I'm at Home." "Your Teeth" and "Figure 8" are slow, nostalgic, and prime examples of Peach Pit's storytelling, while "Puppy Grin" immediately follows as the next track on the album with a quick, electric punch. Perhaps one of the most underrated tracks on the album, "Brian's Movie," includes a strong chorus and solid guitar that creates a catchy tune while also including the heartbreak that

fills the entire album. "Thursday" is one of the most experimental tracks on the album, beginning and ending with shimmery, dream pop sounds. One of the standout tracks, "Shampoo Bottles" reminds one of the bitterness and sting of a breakup while also coping with the confusion and anger of being alone and missing someone. The ballad includes comical lyrics that quickly transition into heartbreaking realizations:

"It's fricking trash, all that organic hoo-hah
from one of your health food stores

...

And it's all just so forgettable
Till I'm sitting with your stuff alone
Man, why can't I just let it go?"

In April, many of us were (or still are) stuck in our homes and fearful for the future as we watched the world become engulfed in a pandemic that has taken so much from all of us. *You and Your Friends* provided comfort in the spring and summer months as we all coped with loneliness, confusion, anger, and explored our emotions in times of isolation. The album is lyrical, emotional, and arrived at the perfect time. This goes to show that while vocals, instruments, and songwriting are all important elements of a great album, sometimes the timing, hearing a song that resonates with you at your current state, well that's just the icing on the cake.

-Julianne Akers

7

The Microphones Microphones in 2020



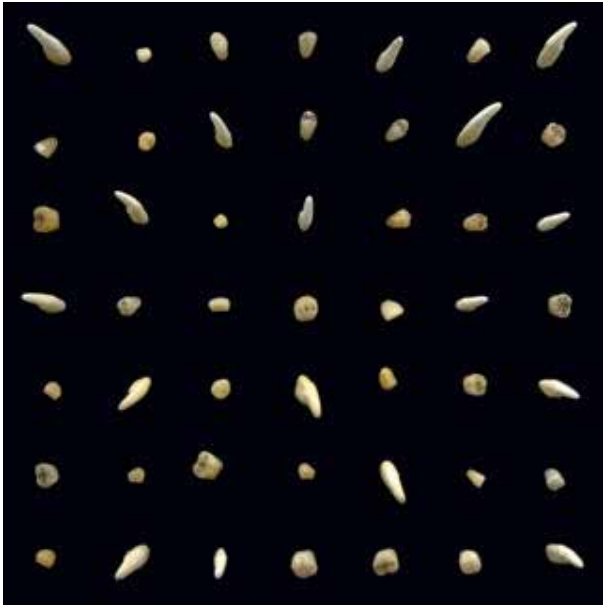
The Microphones' first project in 17 years, a 44-minute song titled "Microphones in 2020" acts as a saga detailing the process of finding yourself and the surrealism in the act of recalling moments of your life. Starting with about seven minutes of instrumental guitar which builds to the opening line, "the true state of all things," the piece sets up a strong introduction to its poetic nature. This line and its thematics are repeated throughout the first half of the song, and the second part delves into a philosophical retelling of stories from the artist's past. The melody and its instrumental counterpart are not complicated, but the droning aspect adds to the overall message of the song. Its simplistic folky sound enhances the lyrics and the artist's goal, creating a pleasant and personal experience which feels like sitting down and listening to a beloved father figure reminisce on his life.

-Abby Gibbons

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

6

clipping.
visions of bodies being



Clipping's most recent album, *Visions of Bodies Being Burned*, keeps true to style, primarily composed of dark, echoey beats and Daveed Diggs' languid (progressing in speed, but maintaining a distinct timbre) rapping over them. Also true to style are significant staticky/glitch features. This album serves as a second part to *There Existed an Addiction to Blood*, released last year (2019). Listening to a Clipping album is like reading an anthology, with each track containing its own story, but flowing together in a comprehensive way due to thematic similarities. The tracks on this particular album are all culturally relevant and as terrifying as they can be, with each of the interludes creating uniquely haunting ambiances. Clipping does horror best, and in 2020 horror hits close to home, making this album a true standout of the year.

- Abby Gibbons

5

Charli XCX
How I'm Feeling Now



How I'm Feeling Now is always going to be tied to *These Unprecedented Times* – Charli announced just a few weeks into lockdown that she'd begin work on her next album and, a hair over 5 weeks later, *How I'm Feeling Now* was released. Churning out an album from scratch in a month and a half as a quarantine project is impressive enough, but to do that and produce an album of this quality is a rare thing. Despite being her first full-length album devoid of features, *How I'm Feeling Now* is in fact Charli's most collaborative album yet – in addition to PC Music's A.G. Cook assisting in production, Charli invited fans to Zoom calls with her, sharing song demos and allowing feedback, in something of a combination making-of/choose-your-own-adventure experience. Fans even chose photographs for the pre-release singles' artwork. Likely the first album entirely produced in lockdown, *How I'm Feeling Now* is as brilliant as it is possibly historic.

Sporting maybe the most appropriate album title of the year, *How I'm Feeling Now* acts like a time capsule of the earliest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, when anxious restlessness was the predominant mood as we all adjusted to life in quarantine. Charli trades her past lyrical motifs about clubbing and partying for more introspective musings on her relationships ("forever", "7 years"), the mental health effects of quarantine, and odes to missing going out with her friends ("anthems"). Despite the shift in subject matter, however, *How I'm Feeling Now* still goes hard. Working with A.G. Cook, BJ Burton, and other PC Music-associated producers, Charli mostly sticks to the "experimental" side of her trademark experimental pop. This is banging-pots-and-pans music: opener "pink diamond" is almost antagonistically noisy, and album closer "visions" is a euphoric raver that just begs to blast in a club post-lockdown. A few tracks here threaten sensory overload, but the way Charli and co. balance chaos with sticky-sweet hooks is just plain fun. An album of club bangers about not being able to go to the club, *How I'm Feeling Now* provided a much-needed escape from the general horrors of 2020, and more than six months on it holds up so well I'm sure we'll all still be dancing to it long after bars and clubs open up again.

-Will Morris

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

4

Gorillaz Song Machine



Song Machine!?! The Gorillaz?!? Where should I begin? Song Machine is the latest addition to the incredible discography of music that The Gorillaz have already put out. With this new album comes not only new sounds, but new lore to the overall story of The Gorillaz. The music videos that accompany ten of the seventeen songs from the album contain symbolism and a deeper meaning of staying connected in this crazy world. While Song Machine was mostly completed before the Pandemic and the crazy events of 2020, this album still makes intellectual comments on the current events of the world. Song Machine, Season One: Strange Times is full of funk, soul, electronic, and so many other genres that become a wonderful melody of sound that anyone can enjoy.

Every song on this album contains a feature of a diverse artist from JPEGMafia to Elton John to Georgia. It helps expand upon the themes of togetherness by bridging genres and connecting artists who have different sounds together to create something new and inspiring. Although the sound of this album is reminiscent of some of the early works of The Gorillaz it still is able to be its own creation. Every song has its own catchy chorus, tune, sound, and story. Songs like "Pac-Man" and "Desole" creates a fun vibe through the use of video game synths for "Pac-Man" and a wide range of vocals for "Desole" from Fatoumata Diawara. Songs like "The Pink

Phantom" are able to create a slower more intimate experience with vocal performances of 6lack and Elton John, while holding onto the funk of The Gorillaz. The drums on each song are unique and change with varying complexity to match the moving synths and beautiful piano of each song. When relistening you can find yourself picking out extra instruments in the background, like a horn or a clap, that elevates the song even higher. The way the chords play along with the melody between instruments is just amazing.

Where this album really shines is in its ability to take the uniqueness of each artist and use it to elevate the sound of a song by blending it with the typical sound of The Gorillaz. While sometimes artists can sound unlike themselves while on other artist's tracks Song Machine focuses on bringing out the best of what each person brings to the table and giving it its own spotlight. The music videos deserve their own analysis because of the cleverness of them, for example using GTA 5 and driving around Vinewood as a direct comparison to Los Angeles in the song "Valley of the Pagans". This album is great! I'm personally excited to dive deeper into the lore of The Gorillaz, while jamming out to this music. This album truly has something for everybody and I highly recommend it and it's accompanying animated music videos.

-Damario Walden

Fetch the Bolt Cutters is the most mature album of the year. Fiona Apple returns triumphantly from her Idler Wheel as if she had spent her eight years between projects meticulously crafting this album.

To me, some of the appeal and elevation of this album comes from such a confident voice being so different from my own. Apple is forty-three and knows exactly what she wants in her life for herself in almost every aspect. She has stood by too many poor excuses of men for too long and will not put up with it any longer (her lyrics "Kick me under the table all you want; I won't shut up" and "I would beg to disagree, but begging disagrees with me" come to mind). She has utter confidence in her writing, her voice, and her ability to perform said song to a bone-crushing conclusion, regardless of instrumentation. Speaking of which, a few of the standout tracks on the album are Apple on the piano. This, along with the generally sparse instrumentation elsewhere, lends itself to a sense of solitude, especially when you can hear her dogs in the background of a few tracks. It's easy to imagine her alone in a big house with her dogs, belting out to and for only herself.

This is not an anemic forty-something pop star making "adult contemporary" (whatever that means) music for people somehow even older than them. Fetch the Bolt Cutters is an emphatic, insistent album that does not need to ask to be taken seriously.

-Joseph Mullen

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Fiona Apple Fetch the Bolt Cutters



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

2

Taylor Swift Folklore



On the never ending list of twists during 2020, a surprise goth-folk album from Taylor Swift was the last thing anyone expected. Announced within 24 hours of it's release on July 24th, Folklore takes a new direction away from the hip-hop production and pop elements usually associated with Swift's music. While most of her previous seven albums are composed of break-up anthems to scream with your best friends, Folklore takes a more introspective and personal approach to love and loss.

Folklore explores a new depth of imagery that fans have been waiting for. This is shown most notably on the record through the exploration of a teenage love triangle as told from three perspectives. Starting with "cardigan", the listener is shown the situation through Betty's experience. Swift's downcast vocals reflect the metaphor of the Betty character being compared to a cardigan that's been forgotten, found by her partner James, then discarded again. Taylor then collaborated with long-time friend Jack Antonoff to write "august" (coincidentally the 8th track), which dives into the residual feelings of the summer fling between James and the unnamed person he cheated with. Although most of the production was done by Aaron Dessner, Antonoff's pop influences are evident in this song and serve as a sort of irony between the pain held in the lyrics. Collaborations between Taylor Swift and Jack Antonoff are historically stand-out songs, and despite Folklore lacking an obvious single, this held true as "august" peaked at #4 on the Billboard Hot 100 the week of August 8, 2020. The final song in the trilogy,

titled "Betty" is told from the perspective of James, who is trying to make amends with his now ex-girlfriend. Taylor pulls everything together in the final lyrics of the song, "Standing in your cardigan / kissing in my car again / stopped at a streetlight / you know I miss you". The story is left without definitive closure, but her heartfelt lyricism makes the listener wish for a happy ending for everyone involved.

Although storytelling is Taylor Swift's most obvious strength, Folklore could possibly be the best example of her creativity to date. Accompanied by mostly only acoustic guitar and piano, Taylor was able to showcase her ability to make fictional stories feel so real and relatable. Unlike her most popular releases, these songs weren't a scavenger hunt for fans to link back to real-life scandals. Instead, Taylor gave listeners the opportunity to project their own emotions and experiences onto the songs. That being said, Folklore sounds like it was made without expectations. It seems as if the time in quarantine and surprise element of this album allowed everyone involved to feel the freedom to take creative risks. Even if Taylor Swift choses to expand into this sweater-weather sound that she's broken into, I believe that Folklore will hold as a stand-out album in her discography.

-Sam Cruzado

Phoebe Bridgers' latest album, Punisher, captures a folky nostalgia which seemed to remind everyone of times not plagued by pandemics and disasters of all scopes. This album let its listeners escape into Phoebe's world, one which coincides with our own personal worlds in unique ways. Punisher encapsulates every heartbreak of the year in a way that is shockingly eloquent and captivating. Each song could stand its ground without the context of the album, but the blending from one to the next creates an auditory experience which is all-consuming and ethereal. The album wraps up with "I Know the End," a song which details the apocalyptic feelings brought on by this harrowing year, simultaneously beautiful, sad, and incredibly personal.

- Abby Gibbons

Phoebe Bridgers' second album, Punisher, arrived in the summer of 2020 with emotional lyrics and melodic vocals. Bridgers' gentle, soft voice is able to serve some of the most vivid songwriting of the year. In "Kyoto" she notably picks up a much stronger, upbeat tone than any of the other songs on the album. This is due in part to the sped-up tempo and horns throughout the song. "ICU" ends with "let the dystopian morning light pour in" and that is exactly what the song feels like, in fact, Bridgers spends the entire song talking about feeling something. The title track is graceful, elegant, and sang in a way where you feel every word. Phoebe Bridgers has a unique way with her music that makes it feel like it is just you and her in the room. Heartbreaking lyrics overflow the album and in "Moon Song," Bridgers' lyrics seem to tiptoe around quietly and with a somber ending: "But you know the killer doesn't understand." Most unexpectedly, we received a country-folk ballad on this album. Full of banjo, "Graceland Too" details the story of a woman seeking a fresh start. It says, "Turn up the music so thought don't intrude / Predictably winds up thinking of Elvis / And wonders if he believed songs could come true." The final song of Punisher, "I Know The End," like every song on the album is filled with brilliant lyrics, but if I had to choose one line from this song, "But I'm not gonna go down with my hometown in a tornado / I'm gonna chase it," takes the cake. I could go through and dissect all of the lyrical masterpieces on this album but to sum it all up, Phoebe Bridgers returned to music in a year where we all needed it more than ever. With an ever so light voice, she presented us with poignant lyrics that will be hard to top, but we all know she will.

- Julianne Akers

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Pheobe Bridgers Punisher



ALBUMS OF THE YEAR 2020

1

Phoebe Bridgers Punisher



Have you ever had a conversation with someone and as they talk their words go in one ear and out the other? You begin to drool and your eyes glaze over and you're desperately looking for a way to end the conversation. That is the definition of a punisher to Phoebe Bridges, and in her second solo LP, Punisher, she explores the impact of her actions on the people who surround her and her environment. Behind the comforting, soft, yet dynamic vocals, there are lyrics that contemplate just how big we are in the grand scheme of things. Phoebe Bridges creates an album that is like an ocean in how you rock from side to side in its waves, takes you out in a rushing riptide, leaves you in a peaceful stillness, yet hides something much bigger under its depth.

Phoebe creates a soft comforting setting with songs that ebb and flow like the rising and falling of tides. Songs such as "Garden Song", "Halloween", and "Moon Song" have soft vocals with light guitar riffs in the background that gives a calming life to the each song, while having a pulse that is always there in the background the directs it all. Phoebe's use of dynamics, pauses, and silence creates an anticipation that always keeps you invested in where the song is going. Songs like Kyoto and Chinese Satellite are more upbeat and attune to a rushing current. The more electric sound of the guitar and upfront sound of the drums create a carefree foot tapping sound that's just plain fun. Just as easy as it is for one to get lost at sea, one can also find themselves lost in this beautiful piece of work. This was my first real experience with music from Phoebe Bridges and I thoroughly enjoyed myself. Everything from the background vocals, to

the horns on certain songs, to the ambient noises was amazing. You can tell that the people who worked on it actually cared. The ending song "I Know the End" wraps everything up in a chaotic, gorgeous bow. Punisher is a must listen.

- Damario Walden

Punisher feels like a lush, ethereal apocalypse, and it sounds very far away, like it was recorded deep underwater or high up in the atmosphere. In the most apocalyptic-feeling and socially detached year of my lifetime, it makes perfect sense this is WUOG's album of the year. The mood of the album is depressed, but there's a reluctant hope in between devastating verses and self-deprecating one-liners, because, well, how else are we gonna get through another day inside, another day surrounded by mass tragedy that we're powerless to stop? Of course this is the album of the year.

A masterwork of the singer-songwriter genre, the references Bridgers makes to Elliott Smith in the title track are apt. Over a mix of strings, horns, percussion, and acoustic guitars ranging from ethereal to bombastic, Phoebe weaves a myriad of heartbreaking anecdotes that are as specific to her life as they are relatable to anyone. It's a front row seat to the inner workings of her mind and, well, turns out her mind is a lot like the rest of ours. She's as concerned with big picture stuff like life-after-death or the ennui brought on by the lack of human interaction in the modern world as she is with the difficulties of staying friends (bandmates, even) with an ex or worrying that she'd be annoying if she ever met her favorite musician. Highlights include the acoustic "Moon Song", which depicts (in wrenching detail) the pain of loving someone who hates themselves, "Chinese Satellite", in which she weighs faith (or lack thereof) in a higher power and afterlife, and bouncy single "Kyoto", where, over triumphant horns and synths, she struggles with an absent father and a feeling of emptiness even after achieving some of her wildest dreams. It all comes together on closer "I Know The End" where tour exhaustion, religious imagery, political disaster, and mental health collapse all merge for the album's cataclysmic finale. It's as much about the apocalypse as it is losing your sense of self, and after the year we've had, I think that's something anyone can relate to. Punisher is defined by this feeling of loss, of not being able to protect the ones you love due to forces, internal, external, and downright apocalyptic. Of course it's the album of the year.

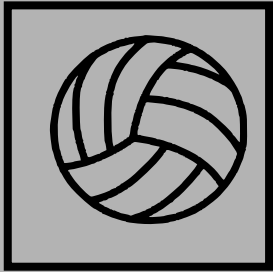
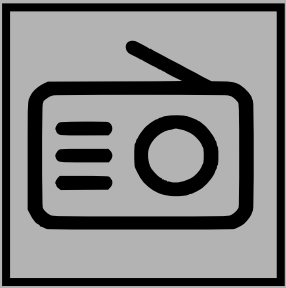
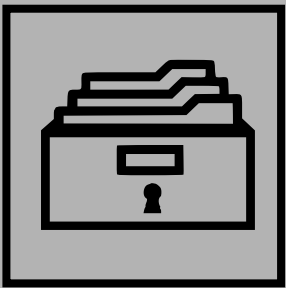
- Will Morris

I'm going to preface by saying this: I streamed almost nine thousand minutes of Phoebe Bridgers in 2020. I'm not proud of that statistic, which equals out to 150 hours, or almost a full week, non-stop, of indie folk-rock heartbreak. If you want the TL;DR from me for this album, Punisher is very good, thanks for reading! To get into it, Punisher delivers poetic prose and emotionally-charged lyrics on every track. This album paints mental imagery incredibly well, bringing me some much-welcomed artificial doom and gloom from the natural doom and gloom that awaited us all in 2020. While every song on this album is a work of art, the three song block from "Chinese Satellite" to "Moon Song" to "Savior Complex" is one of the most vulnerable and tear-jerking journeys I've taken in a musical minute. In an industry which feeds on vulnerable sadness, particularly in cis women, in order to sell music, it can feel kind of icky diving into someone's deeply personal affairs. The beauty in this album is that I rarely feel the need to pry into Phoebe Bridger's private life, but rather it gives me an opportunity to reflect on my own experiences, which can be a beautiful, dangerous, and potentially even social journey. I'm thankful this album made my pandemic experience a little more bearable and I'm more thankful for the memories I've made with others who hold this album as dearly as I do.

- Chase McGee

In Punisher, Phoebe Bridgers solidifies her songwriting while simultaneously exploring the limits of her accompaniments. Produced with the help of Tony Berg and Ethan Gruska, her second full length album showcases a range of sounds. Spanning from the metal thrashing on "I Know the End" to the banjo and fiddle on "Graceland Too", each song feels like a new experience. Phoebe has been constantly touring since 2017, and in that time she's been able to bring a heartfelt sense of candor to her songwriting. Both the hopelessness conveyed in lyrics of "Chinese Satellite" with "singing the same three songs over and over" accompanied by a strong string arrangement, and in the airy horn section in "Kyoto" mirrored by the lyrics "I'm a liar" exemplify Phoebe's ability to collaborate while maintaining her self-sufficiency in writing. In full, listeners leave Punisher feeling purged, as if you've lived the stories of the album alongside Phoebe Bridgers.

-Sam Cruzado



Here's to Brighter and Better Things.