

Quicksand's Top 50 Albums of 2008

Contributed by Andrew Bosiack
Sunday, 28 December 2008
Last Updated Monday, 29 December 2008

50. Dan Friel & Ghost Town

{youtube}SwjffcoMRkY{/youtube}

Parts & Labor's Dan Friel's short but inspired "Ghost Town" crafts fantastic, fun melodies with 8-bit aesthetics and makes it a blast to listen to.

49. The Raconteurs & Consolers of the Lonely

{youtube}GgWBhIH4mC4{/youtube}

One of the year's best straight forward, unabashed rock and roll records. Jack White's guitars still scream and howl, and the songwriting pair of Jack and Brendon Benson bring the heat with variations on blues, country-soul and garage punk.

48. Spiritualized & Songs in A&E

{youtube}_k1s2xBXMDg{/youtube}

This soul rock album from the brilliant Spiritualized is at times epic and uplifting, at times haunting and dark. It's always spot on musically, and the production is perfect for every mood it reaches for.

47. Abe Vigoda &ndash; Skeleton

{youtube}4odrEGm3MYc{/youtube}

Part of the blossoming L.A. noise scene, Abe Vigoda mix in their unique tropicalia with more common noise sensibilities to great result.

46. Vampire Weekend &ndash; Self Titled

{youtube}9wHI9qRsMzw{/youtube}

Collegiate afro-popsters Vampire Weekend have been the critical/blog darlings of the year, without question. Their self-titled debut shows much promise, full of immediate, infectious pop songs.

45. Why? &ndash; Alopecia

{youtube}WT_bgCcStCw{/youtube}

Scatter shot and paranoid, Yoni Wolf delivers an almost unclassifiable album of strange pop music, over which he lays his stream-of-consciousness vocal style. This could be a disaster, but it's as catchy and fun as it is dark and disillusioned.

44. The Bug &ndash; London Zoo

{youtube}zwmUOJR-GwA{/youtube}

Low end embracing dub heavyweight The Bug releases a fantastic summer album, perfect for walking in the city or driving to the beach.

43. Department Of Eagles &ndash; In Ear Park

{youtube}26MRf7MrJNi{/youtube}

This Grizzly Bear side project album is a great place keeper while waiting for the next release from that amazing act. Listen to the playful and earnest "No One Does It Like You" for proof that this side project can hold its own.

42. The Tallest Man On Earth – Shallow Graves

{youtube}6bKFt1tBuAw{/youtube}

This Swede was obviously weaned on Dylan, and this almost plays as homage to the great one. This would all be derivative and bland if it wasn't executed so perfectly and the songwriting wasn't absolutely top notch. Fortunately for us, it is.

41. Portishead – 3rd

{youtube}Yoz41FUzciE{/youtube}

Another unlikely comeback this year, Portishead reinvent themselves instead of rehashing the same 90's trip-hop, to haunting and gorgeous effect.

40. Earth – The Bees Made Honey In The Lions Skull

{youtube}qcLic3qg-90{/youtube}

Doom rockers Earth play impossibly slow, heavy music. If you have the patience, their deliberate style pays off in spades with its beautiful melodies and powerful ebbs and flows.

39. The Mountain Goats – Heretic Pride

{youtube}jd3zjozVSEg{/youtube}

John Darnielle, one of the brilliant songwriters of our time, has never been an impressive guitar player or vocalist. But what he brings to the table is fiery passion and soul-crushing lyricism, so good that you can't help but be all consumed by his songs. Heretic Pride is another fine collection of these songs.

38. Cut Copy – In Ghost Colours

{youtube}V4SponDQDWw{/youtube}

This album is the musical equivalent of bubblegum cotton candy. This isn't a bad thing, at all. The shimmering piece of dance-pop is instantly infectious and fun, with unstoppable hooks at every turn.

37. Crystal Castles – Self Titled

{youtube}T2gdbQpESNY{/youtube}

Like an arcade in a dancehall, Crystal Castles's raucous music pulses, bleeps and sneers often all at once, alive with attitude and energy.

36. Q-Tip – The Renaissance

{youtube}44BADYQc0Ls{/youtube}

Tribe's Q-Tip does his best work in years on The Renaissance, wrapping his unparalleled wordplay with snappy, quality beats.

35. Metallica – Death Magnetic

{youtube}wEghrqL150Y{/youtube}

Talk about an unlikely comeback. Death Magnetic sounds like a proper follow-up to Master of Puppets. 'Nuff said.

34. Los Campesinos! – We Are Beautiful, We Are Doomed

{youtube}ltUSKuBK-j0{/youtube}

Los Campesinos! 2nd album released this year offers more of the same, with the first 3 tracks even topping anything on “Hold On Now, Youngster”. If the second half of the album held up as well, this album would beside-by-side with its predecessor in the top 5.

33. Drive By Truckers – Brighter Than Creations Dark

{youtube}EpkQ_ZX_lzo{/youtube}

Isbell-less for the first time in years, DBT embraces their country roots on this sprawling southern rock statement. It ranges from fierce, to contemplative, to folksy, to meditative and wistful over its 19 tracks.

32. Gang Gang Dance – Saint Dymphna

{youtube}rqn7kaCm8No{/youtube}

The year’s strangest and least danceable dance album may also be its most rewarding and hypnotically pleasing.

31. Jay Reatard – Matador Singles ‘08

{youtube}yBpGSbqgL1g{/youtube}

A compilation of Reatard’s 2008 singles series, this full length displays all manners of Jay – at his punkiest, catchiest, wittiest, most precocious and snarling…hell, sometimes even sweet.

30. Elbow &ndash; The Seldom Seen Kid

{youtube}iL4mywCOJXA{/youtube}

Largely unnoticed for years in the states, Manchester’s Elbow should start getting notice after this near perfect, career defining album of swaggering rock and soul.

29. Black Mountain &ndash; In The Future

{youtube}8upxRhff7cE{/youtube}

This classic rock inspired group blends Black Sabbath worthy riffs with psych-rock freakouts and towering vocal performances for an unrelenting rock album experience.

28. Krallice &ndash; Self Titled

{youtube}P-vMkwdZkvE{/youtube}

Krallice is a prog-metal band that seems to understand perfectly how to add just the right wrinkles to its epic songs to set them apart in a genre full of sound-alike’s. Unique guitar flourishes and an uncommon sense of melody and *gasp* the major key make this one of the year’s finest metal releases.

27. Hot Chip &ndash; Made In The Dark

{youtube}AW94AEmzFhQ{/youtube}

Electro-pop masters Hot Chip follow up the fantastic The Warning with another set of uptempo dance pop numbers and lush electronic ballads.

26. Jaytech &ndash; Everything is OK

{youtube}HgZ5xi4rxqE{/youtube}

Over one hour of high energy dance/trance, the album's first track gets your feet moving and doesn't let go until its final track – a perfectly appropriate end-of-the-night denouement.

25. Lil Wayne – Carter III

{youtube}nXOGOqvCI38{/youtube}

Lil Wayne's Carter III is, to date, his crowning achievement. It's the culmination of his growth into a wildly unhinged, spitfire MC who isn't afraid to push every boundary of his genre.

24. Stephen Malkmus – Real Emotional Trash

{youtube}ilMJaekiXaA{/youtube}

Since his Pavement days, Malkmus has continued to mine classic rock sounds more and more on each subsequent release. Real Emotional Trash is the pinnacle of this effort, with its stretched out psych-rock opuses and groovy 70's guitar rock aesthetic.

23. Bon Iver – For Emma, Forever Ago

{youtube}62i9Sodwp5o{/youtube}

Though self released in 2007 to minimal notice, 2008 saw this singer-songwriter album get an official label release and build critical momentum by way of its gorgeous production, top notch song craft, and perfectly melancholy performances from Justin Vernon, the man behind “Bon Iver”.

22. Fuck Buttons – Street Horrsing

{youtube}0TfeEfSKECw{/youtube}

A perfect blend of the aesthetics of noise rock and the melodious build-ups of post rock make this challenging but rewarding record among the year's best.

21. Blitzen Trapper – Furr

{youtube}mvnHBcvbV0g{/youtube}

Blitzen Trapper wear their influences on their sleeves, blending late '60s Beatles and Dylan with Tom Petty and Pavement on this fun, schizophrenic disc of catchy rockers and folksy ballads.

20. The Dodos – Visitor

{youtube}YhLRxui7vXU{/youtube}

Fantastic debut LP from this guitar –n drums duo gives us excitable tracks built around clattering rhythm parts and playful melodies.

19. Frightened Rabbit – Midnight Organ Fight

{youtube}nBcbDS5AGnk{/youtube}

Scottish indie rock outfit Frightened Rabbit take a major step forward with their second album, melding heart-on-sleeve lyrical delivery with crisp, punchy pop-rock arrangements and sweet, piano laden ballads.

18. Black Milk – Tronic

{youtube}kcP8QJ_tP0{/youtube}

The year's best produced rap album offers one stand out track after another of electro-tinged bangers. The sum of its parts is enough to leave any hip-hop fan just about breathless, as Black Milk also turns out his sharpest rhymes to date.

17. Boris &ndash; Smile

{youtube}t_GgowniQWk{/youtube}

Japanese sludge/doom metal giants take a left turn into atmospheric power ballads and epic, near post-rock anthems. Oh, and they still throw in some old fashioned thrash for good measure.

16. Flying Lotus &ndash; Los Angeles

{youtube}yXULecvImpw{/youtube}

This instrumental hip-hop tour-de-force draws from Flying Lotus’ usual electronic and jazz influences, at times recalling J Dilla and Madlib, while highlighting Ellison’s unique production skills.

15. Women &ndash; Self Titled

{youtube}Zru_mgJmBjA{/youtube}

Like Liars, Women clearly take joy in blending dissonant noise and drone with pop sensibility. This self titled debut showcases both sides of the band, and its strength lies in how expertly executed these elements are.

14. The Hold Steady &ndash; Stay Positive

{youtube}FY3V4ObYRsA{/youtube}

The Hold Steady’s 4th great album in a row shows the band growing up a bit, expanding its sonic palette, and still bringing the house down with its top notch bar rock anthems. Add in Craig Finn’s always brilliant lyricism and storytelling and you’ve got another classic addition to The Hold Steady’s awesome catalog.

13. Sun Kil Moon &ndash; April

{youtube}65DxMFO9gg8{/youtube}

The proper follow-up to 2003's stellar Ghosts of the Great Highway, April finds Mark Kozelek in fine form, weaving his sad but hopeful ruminations and beautiful song-craft into a truly engaging album.

12. Torche &ndash; Meanderthal

{youtube}E5iXtt_d5nw{/youtube}

A stoner/sludge metal band more influenced by Sonic Youth than Black Sabbath, Torche brings the heat AND the melody with Meanderthal.

11. Fleet Foxes &ndash; Fleet Foxes

{youtube}brZTvGlzeGg{/youtube}

2008's best debut album has been talked about to death as its momentum has built throughout the year. The music does the best talking, though. This gorgeous, harmony laden pastoral folk album almost defies description. Like CSNY meets Brian Wilson meets a medieval chamber chorus, Fleet Foxes is the year's most beautiful album.

10. No Age &ndash; Nouns

{youtube}aLY9q-d3gXU{/youtube}

Noise rock hits the mainstream? No Age has garnered critical attention from unlikely sources all year (MTV, Rolling Stone, Late Night Shows). This high energy duo brings a little extra to the table besides just squalling guitar distortion and 2-minute punk outbursts…that is, a fantastic sense of melody, atmosphere and arrangement to their songs.

9. Harvey Milk &ndash; Life&hellip;The Best Game In Town

{youtube}_srYNt2eyo8{/youtube}

Stoner metal legends Harvey Milk pretty much came out of nowhere in releasing the year's most devastatingly awesome hard rock record. Drawing from influences more diverse than most metal outfits, "Life…The Best Game in Town” guides the listener through bellowing dirges, speed-riff instrumentals, dark power ballads and sunny pop-metal anthems. "Life…” is one hell of a ride.

8. **Wale – Mixtape About Nothing**

{youtube}mPllknuC3L0{/youtube}

My favorite rap album of 2008 takes a concept that shouldn't work (Seinfeld and hip-hop?), and makes it as effective and hard hitting as anything released this year. It helps that Wale (pronounced Wah-Lay) is one of the finest up and coming MC's out there, and he plays this one perfect, using the occasional clip from the classic series, as well as Michael Richards's infamous N-word blast at a comedy club, to incredible effect. The beats and samples are expertly chosen, and Wale just kills it on the mic from start to finish.

7. **Deerhoof – Offend Maggie**

{youtube}9ezA8mTWXNM{/youtube}

One of the most under appreciated bands of this decade, Deerhoof just turn out one kick-ass record after another. Lead vocalist Satomi is a deal breaker for many, and it's a shame, because this art-rock outfit can simultaneously hook you with a killer melody and lock into an infectious riff (of which they never seem to run out). Offend Maggie adds an extra guitarist for a more beefed up sound, and drops much of the digital beats and synths for a more analog approach. The result is one of their finest moments.

6. **Wolf Parade – At Mount Zoomer**

{youtube}2shLapSNr0U{/youtube}

Three years after the excellent, but singles-package feel of Apologies to the Queen Mary, Wolf Parade gives us a more focused album of their signature proggy, angular alt-rock. At Mount Zoomer is full of memorable, guitar & synth driven melodies. Spencer Krug and Dan Boeckner once again alternate vocal and songwriting duties, their unique yet harmonious styles making the album a thrilling ride.

5. M83 – Saturdays=Youth

{youtube}gY8iy8S0S4w{/youtube}

A 1980's synth-pop album is one of the best albums of 2008? Sure, why not? Saturdays=Youth is an unapologetic pop album, full of bombastic hooks and beautiful textures. "Kim & Jessie" and "Graveyard Girl" wouldn't be out of place in a John Hughes classic. In the case of M83, this is a nostalgia trip worth taking.

4. Los Campesinos! – Hold On Now, Youngster

{youtube}Nj6SO_yKMe8{/youtube}

Opinions on blog darlings Los Campesinos! seem split to two extremes…either you find them exhilaratingly fun or downright grating. It's hard to deny that this is the most fun album of the year though, and the killer hooks keep piling up, track after track. Just a gang of Welsh kids having a hell of a time.

3. TV On The Radio – Dear Science

{youtube}PkjsBTf21FY{/youtube}

On Dear Science, TVOTR open things up a bit and let the songs breath. The result is their sharpest, funkier album to date. Lyrically, its classic TVOTR…paranoid, sexed up anthems that fit the times perfectly.

2. The Walkmen – You & Me

{youtube}EXQ-BNiR9vU{/youtube}

The Walkmen finally completed their transformation from a harder rocking singles band to a more musically ambitious album band. This album doesn't hit you right away, instead opting to kick things off with a few moodier numbers before darting in several unpredictable musical directions, all underscored by the band's signature guitar work and vocal brilliance. A tremendous, engaging album…The Walkmen's best yet.

1. Deerhunter – Microcastle/Weird Era Cont.

{youtube}T1JHdSBibO8{/youtube}

Has there been a more unlikely critical darling in recent memory than Deerhunter? The beautiful noise of 2007's Cryptograms gives way to the band's pop instincts on Microcastle, and the payoff is a woozy blend of melodious shoegaze, alt rock, and ambient pop. Throw in a full length bonus disc of similar, if noisier, material and you've got the year's best musical package.