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BEST POWER POP OF 2015 – by Mike Baron

Posted on 18 February 2016





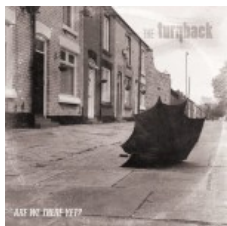
1. **Secret Friend: *Sleeper***

Steven Fox' trans-Pacific collaboration continues, involving Willie Wisely, Kelly Jones, and Linus of Hollywood. Fox writes and plays most instruments, but what sets this band apart is the unusually rich tapestry of textures and the inventive melodies. There are more hooks in a Secret Friend song than on most bands' entire albums. The songwriting is reminiscent of Burt Bacharach, the best of the Brill Bdlg., Jimmy Webb and Brian Wilson. Kelly Jones' vocal on opener "Blue Sky" is hair-raising.



2. **Supraluxe: *Morphine Creek***

Jim Risser's songs are as readily identifiable as those of Nick Piunti or Nick Lowe. The melodies are dreamy and intoxicating and the hooks are powerful. Trio sounds much bigger than they really are. This is a power pop lead fist in a velvet glove.



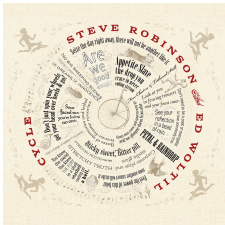
3. **The Turnback: *Are We There Yet***

Even better than their debut of several years ago, the Turnback have mastered the art of shoehorning powerful bridges and hooks into one-octave spaces. Fortunately, the album opens up after the first five songs into more expansive, almost Rasperry territory. The Hawks-like "A Place For Me," "Seconds," and the exquisite "If I Were God" are highlights from a consistently strong record that straddles power pop and rock.



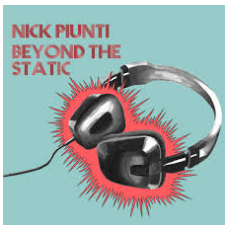
4. Gordon Weiss: *It's About Time*

Weiss' deeply personal yet rockin' album appeals equally to the heart and the gut, from "The Ugly Inside," with its superbly timed major/minor shifts, to the creepy but unforgettable, "I'm Your Fan," and especially Weiss' epic reworking of "The Great Pretender," "The Great Imitator" are all great rock.



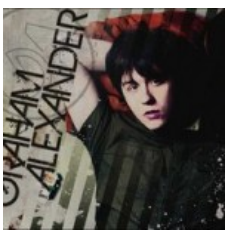
5. Steve Robison and Ed Wotil: *Cycle*

Two Florida veterans of many bands made this throw-back album covering whole continents of styles and moods, in the manner of Jefferson Airplane or Country Joe & the Fish. Pyschedelia segues into folk, segues into hard rock. The relentless onslaught of hooks on "Wake Up Dreamin'" recalls such hook-heavy bands as Kelly's Heels or Marmalade Soul.



6. Nick Piunti: *Beyond the Static*

Like the previous year's *13 In My Head*, Piunti lines them up and shoots them down, one perfect power popper after another, like the Plimsouls, Shoes, or Bill Lloyd.



7. Graham Alexander: *Repeat Deceiver*

Alexander is a musical chameleon, not unlike Bowie, but with more guts and grits. There are traces of Bruno Mars and Motown in horn-tinted tracks like "Romeo Blue" or "She's a Chameleon," while "Games" could have appeared on any early ELO album. Great party album.



8. Reno Bo: *Lessons From A Shooting Star*

Recorded in Nashville, Bo also has his ear on east and west coast punk, folk and rock.

"Strange Maps" could be a Jackson Browne comp, while the title track offers a guitar rave-up worthy of Clapton. Reno's songwriting reminds me of Greg Pope, the Beatles, and Corin Ashley. This record pulses with life and energetic beauty.



9. *The Wind: Rewind*

Total surprise that this classic eighties power pop trio should return with a set both thoughtful and dynamic. "Fight Like A Girl" is an instant classic with a hook like a Ronda Rousey punch. "Let Me Show You How It's Done" could have been a hit for the Righteous Brothers, while "Which Part of Goodbye" sounds like early Beatles. Power pop for grownups.



10. *The Lunar Laugh: Apollo*

Jared Lekites writes mini rock symphonies in the manner of ELO with a little Who thrown in.

Mike Baron is the creator of comic books *Badger* and (along with *Steve Rude*) *Nexus*. His latest book is "A Brief History of Jazz Rock" – more on Amazon [CLICK HERE](#).

He has written five novels in the last few years, all available on Amazon here:

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss_1/184-5348781-8830168?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=Mike%20Baron. Visit his website

here: <http://bloodyredbaron.net> and on Wikipedia

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