

Off The Tracks ON THIS MONTH'S CD

Toivo

Toivo BOOGIE NOOK



Toivo's self-titled debut is hard to pin to any one genre, enabling the five Wisconsin natives to cover a lot of terrain in 10 songs while still producing a work consistent in both mood and sound. The indie pop vibe is reminiscent of the New Pornographers and the slurred lyrics and the sense of understated cool sounds like early Modest Mouse, and yet, the undercurrent of the record is true rock and roll.

Ryan Urquhart's voice suggests that tones—and the precise way one manipulates that great instrument—can sometimes be more emotive than lyrics themselves. If the album lulls at points, then it never lets you leave its wavelength. It'll have you dancing and hoping that the bluesy voice on "I Ain't Mr. Wonderful" echoes for years to come.

Kiran Herbert

Rupa and the April Fishes

Build ELECTRIC GUMBO RADIO



Perhaps they should have called it *Built* instead. San Francisco's **Rupa and the April Fishes** spent their

first two albums fashioning a hybrid sound that reveled in its inclusiveness: **Rupa Marya** sings in several languages and the band delights in blurring stylistic lines to the point that attempts at categorization become exasperating. On *Build*, those elements are still in place but there's a new cohesiveness and a sharper sense of direction than on the previous efforts. Co-produced by Marya and jazz bassist **Todd Sickafoose**, the new set takes on a more pointed lyrical bent (the sole cover is The Clash's "Guns of Brixton") that, rather than reining them in, gives Marya and her bandmates a ticket to explore and expand even more. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Overmountain Men

The Next Best Thing RAMSEUR



Ancient music, passed down from generation to generation, can influence and sustain a community. But

with modern music like the **Overmountain Men's** second release, one hears wise minstrels longing for a truth nearly gone. Elsewhere, the charming collective seems unaware of anything but the historical ambience of the room; the music breathes new life into the space between the musicians. *The Next Best Thing* also attempts to stand outside of time and clearly succeeds on its own humble yet self-assured terms. One feels the depth of so many generations moving forward as a single persistent voice on this album—that's what the best music

should do. No sophomore slump here—just an echo of some rather poignant ancient music crafted in the often troublesome 21st century.

Randy Ray

Bill Laswell

Means Of Deliverance

INNERHYTHMIC



It's a rare bassist who can turn out a true solo recording that's as full-bodied and gripping as the music

he makes in the company of others. But **Bill Laswell**—one of the most prolific and inventive masters of the bass guitar to come along in the past few decades—proves with *Means Of Deliverance* that he's more than capable of pulling off that feat. Playing an acoustic bass guitar manufactured by Warwick, Laswell is at times lyrical, assertive, experimental and even orchestral on these 10 tracks. Each sports its own personality (one features an ethereal vocal by Laswell's wife, Ethiopian singer **Ejigayehu "Gigi" Shibabaw**), but what makes Laswell's creations that much more alluring is his knack for coaxing sounds from his bass that—while retaining all of the instrument's natural depth—often sound so, well, alien, that they could emanate from another instrument all together. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Joy Formidable

Wolf's Law

CANVASBACK MUSIC/ATLANTIC



Don't let **Joy Formidable's** quieter songs fool you: The North Wales group is a straight-up rock band, particularly on their sophomore album *Wolf's Law*. The disc, a follow-up to 2011 *The Big Roar*, features raucous guitar riffs that rival Led Zeppelin ("Maw Maw Song") and grandiose surges of static noise ("The