



'I went brunette. I feel smarter already'
Socialite Nicole Richie (left) on her new darker hairdo



'We're a little older than you. Because we used to listen to the Chipmunks on a record player. Yes, an old man on a player piano would perform it. We'd go down to the speakeasy and put hot potatoes in our pockets so we'd be warm as we walked home'
Actress Amy Poehler (left), 38, the voice of a female chipmunk in Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Squeakquel, to an MTV reporter

from the heart



(left) drummer Michael Lerner, singer Darby Cicci, and Wild Beasts (below).
 KITYWU RECORDS



Never a dull moment with Junior Boys' *Didemus* (above) and Greenspan.

BEGONE DULL CARE
 Junior Boys
 Domino



For something so meticulously constructed, it's a miracle how relaxed it sounds. The Canadian electronic duo's third album is the undisputed grower of the year.

Every blip, every cascade of arpeggios, every lo-fi whisper by Jeremy Greenspan feels... just right.

It isn't flashy, yet sounds *au courant*. You glimpse retro funk, jazz, country waltz and blue-eyed soul, but all elements are distilled into an emollient whole.



TWO DANCERS
 Wild Beasts
 Domino



What a fandango. Camp and class melded into an unlikely rock combo: Englishmen Hayden Thorpe and Tom Fleming happily flaunt manly falsettos and then stun with Elvis-esque baritone croons in a freaky, dancey, artsy record.

Hooting and howling, they sing in the second track, as if baiting all and sundry to join in.

Peculiar pop indeed.

LIFE ON EARTH
 Tiny Vipers
 Sub Pop

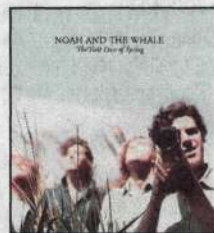


Wonder what life after humans might be like? Seattle's Jesy Fortino aka Tiny Vipers' second album *Life On Earth* may give you an idea or two. Imbued with silences, this sparsely strummed record opens up the realm of possibility.

Her voice segues from gruff to gorgeous, channelling those who have come before, and invoking gods to save us from further destruction.

THE FIRST DAYS OF SPRING

Noah and the Whale
 Young And Lost Club



Poor Charlie Fink. The anti-folk thespian split with fellow Brit musician Laura Marling and poured his heart out in this tremulous revelation of an album.

Remarkably, it achieves grace in gravity. The songs are stately, sometimes orchestral, often bare-knuckled vulnerable. How still in love he sounds, and how very transformed he is by the end.

THEN WE SAW THE STARS AGAIN
 Amberhaze
 KittyWu



As Amberhaze, Singapore-based Italian musician Giuliano Gullotti (below) has produced the year's sleeper hit.

The accomplishment of *Then We Saw The Stars Again* is how uncontrived it all sounds. Pitched between dreaminess and danger, it dips into post-rock, electronica and 1980s-styled shoegaze, unfurling glimpses of beauty when you least expect them.

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