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the Barr Smith Library.
Being what could be termed as ‘music fanatic’ (although I loathe to
use that word, I’m just choosy and excitable) there are some things
that I do care about. Honestly, how long does it really take to
snort some coke and get back out on stage? Sorry, I do generalise...for
the straight-edge bands out there, how long does it take to sip a Coke?

And then there’s the generally stupid audience behaviour. It’s polite
to clap after a performance, OK, but is there any point in doing
that clapping where it starts off slow and gets faster and faster? You
invariably peak too soon, and then have to start all over again.


I have been to numerous gigs in my time and never has a band come
close when the clapping is at its fastest. Give it up. Don’t think that
you are at all influencing their decisions. They are going to come
close, just wait. The band just doesn’t care about your clapping,
because they’ve already got your money. The joke’s on you if they
don’t come out again, and there’s nothing you can do about it. All
they can hear is snorting backstage anyway.

The Beatles). If you’re going to give us an encore, make it mean
something. Otherwise, it’s just like getting a green clinker—utter
disappointment.

The Eels know how it is to be done. It’s unlikely that anyone who
was there is reading this, since only about 30 people showed up
another thing that pisses me off, FOR SHAME!), but let me tell you
when they played at Thebarton Theatre it was special. After several
(possibly planned) encores, E ran back out onstage after the house
lights were back on and after about half the patrons had left, and
dipped out a few more tunes. And then again. Then, he invited us
to the car park for a post-gig gig. I didn’t stick around to see if that
happened. I doubt it did. That night, it was like he was throwing out
little perfectly wrapped Willy Wonka parcels of love to the crowd.
That was special. It made me smile.

And that is what bands should do: reward the crowd for being
appreciative. Make it special to get an encore. Don’t patronise us by
saying ‘This has been the best show of our tour, Adelaide!’ because
we don’t believe you for a minute. Better than New York City?
London? Berlin? Puhlease. Don’t think that you can abuse the fact
that we have paid good money to see you play, and that we will hang
around to soak up just a drip more of your presence, by making us
wait forever and a day while you faff about backstage pontificating
about your contribution to the history of music (chances are,
you’ll be forgotten in two years’ time and grandparents will
never play your music to their grandchildren. Face it, you’re not
The Beatles). If you’re going to give us an encore, make it mean
something. Otherwise, it’s just like getting a green clinker—utter
disappointment.
Anti-Flag
The Bright Lights Of America
Sony BMG

Prior to receiving this album I’d only heard the title track and had pretty well decided how I was going to review it from that: always a bad idea. Let’s start with that track, ‘The Bright Lights of America’: it’s catchy, well produced, easy to listen to and I hated it...

I don’t buy an Anti-Flag record for a catchy pop song. I buy it for raw energy and political outrage. So that was case closed, they’ve signed to a major label and had an established producer do the work and it just wouldn’t live up to albums like Mobilize and Die For the Government. The album sounded like it might be OK for a few radio-friendly tunes but as far as I was concerned it would be crap for Anti-Flag.

Nonetheless I listened to the album in full and found myself reversing my judgement instantly. I still didn’t really care for the title track but working with Tony Visconti (you may have seen his attached to records by David Bowie, T. Rex and Morrissey) certainly seemed to work for the band. They hadn’t softened their stance, they had included some heavier tracks, the lyrics are still laced with obscenity but the sound is more diverse, with the inclusion of a choir of children’s voices and orchestral instruments on several songs. After reading the press release I learned that they had wanted to create a greater depth for their lyrics which has definitely been achieved.

Strangely, for me the highlight is the unlisted acoustic track, ‘Tar and Sagebrush’, which details the hypocrisy of many ‘Christian patriots’ in America. The song relates the tale of a 20-mile journey where the narrator is subjected to humiliating torture from these ‘defenders’ of America for refusing to kiss their flag.

As a whole, the album is less overtly political than previous releases with most of the songs detailing personal experiences. Unlike For Blood and Empire and The Terror State, the liner notes do not explain the motivation behind the songs. Instead they provide four pre-written postcards urging listeners to post them to various government offices in a plea for certain reforms.

So don’t let first impressions fool you. This album doesn’t resemble anything from their back catalogue but, yes, it deserves to be there. This is the sound of a band moving forwards.

MGMT
Oracular Spectacular
Columbia

I was a little sceptical of this CD when it was handed to me in the On Dit office. I pictured another electro band with little talent and too much money to spend on fancy gadgets that practically write their songs for them. Normally I don’t really give this kind of music the time of day. In fact I usually describe my musical taste as ‘anything, as long as it has a guitar in it.’ But how wrong I was to be sodissimisive.

In Oracular Spectacular, electro duo (I guess that’s what you call them) MGMT have produced one of the albums of the year so far. Self described ‘psychic pilgrims’ Andrew Vanwyngarden and Ben Goldwaser, whose paths first crossed at university in America, have worked together to create something that is both original and catchy.

This work comfortably stands alongside recent releases from other artists in the emerging electro genre which I take to include Cut Copy, Muscles and the Presets. The already recognisable opening track ‘Time to Pretend’ is destined to be one of those songs that we will remember 2008 by, while ‘Electric Feel’ sounds like it has been around for years while still managing to give us something different.

This CD is full of surprises including the almost folky ‘Pieces of What’ and ‘Weekend Wars’ which sound like they could’ve come off of a different CD by a different band and incidentally fulfil my above mentioned musical taste criteria. Surely this first full length release is the start of something big for MGMT.

Myriam Robin

Various Artists
Future POP
EMI

When I read that this CD was available for review I hurried to the On Dit office expecting to hear a mix of the dark, electronic dance music of the type made by VNV Nation and Apoptygma Berzerk. It was them, after all, who first coined the term ‘future-pop’ to describe their particular brand of quasi-gothic, intellectual trance.

The bright fluro cover of this compilation warned me however that this is not what awaited me. Future POP is a lot more, well, poppy than I expected. The sleeve lists most of the bigger names in vocal electro-dance music (the Presets, LCD Soundsystem, Moby) as well as some unexpected additions (The Killers!). On a side note, perhaps this collection isn’t so futuristic at all: the songs kept reminding me of eighties films.

The tracks are unmixed, with hooks and wobbly synths dominating. Future POP is likely to have a broad appeal, as is the point of compilations I suppose. Not to sound disparaging however, this really isn’t a shabby collection. EMI marketed Future POP as reclaiming pop music from Idol and Home and Away crossovers. That just about nails it. The tracks were obviously chosen on merit rather than popularity, and as a result almost none of the songs got on my nerves (barring one: my first reaction to ‘Marina Gasolina’ was to skip, and no matter how many times I forced myself to listen to it I just couldn’t ever resist the impulse for more than half the track). Quite a few of the tracks are gems. And this comes from someone whose musical taste by no means extends into the pop domain.

Overall, the CD’s got a good mix of well-known and lesser-known tracks. Selling for a RRP of $18, this isn’t a bad compilation if you want a snapshot of the direction pop music is heading in, and could prove useful for lazy DJs.