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The Rox Box

by Mikey Rox

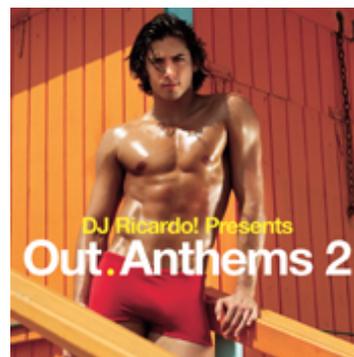
Paula Abdul **Greatest Hits: Straight Up!**

Before American Idol, Paula Abdul was a pop star in her own right – churning out six #1 singles from 1989 to 1991. And now that people care about her again, each of those songs, including “Forever Your Girl,” “Opposites Attract” and “Rush Rush” – along with 12 other tracks that made a blip on the Billboard charts – can be found on one album, Paula’s Greatest Hits: Straight Up! While it’s important to note that the artist formerly known as Emilio Estevez’s wife released a greatest hits album in 2000 – which flopped commercially – she was a force with which to reckon when she actually made sense back in the late ‘80s/early ‘90s. Ya know, before she appeared on QVC awkwardly clapping, swaying and slurring her words. But notwithstanding whatever personal problems she has, you can’t deny her half-dozen homeruns and eight Top 10 singles – all of which have helped her score a Grammy Award, seven MTV awards and record sales exceeding 30 million worldwide. Sure, she may be “Cold-Hearted,” according to recent reports of her diva-like ways, but Paula Abdul “Ain’t Never Gonna Give You Up.” Not until you buy this record, at least.



DJ Ricardo **DJ Ricardo! Presents Out.Anthems 2**

If the success of Out.Anthems, volume one, is any indication, DJ Ricardo! Presents Out.Anthems 2 should top the iTunes dance chart for months to come. Just in time for the 2007 pride season, young gun Ricardo releases this pulse-pounding 16-track set, which includes songs such as “Elektro,” the #1 dance-radio single from Outwork feat. Mr. Gee; “Destination Calabria,” a joint effort between Alex Gaudino and Crystal Waters; an exclusive from Victor Calderone entitled “Let Me Set You Free”; and “Yeah Yeah,” by Bodyrox feat. Luiciana, the hot-weather hymn projected to take over dance floors from Boston to Bali. “The Bodyrox track always gets a huge response,” says Ricardo! “With its rock-and-roll attitude, it’s probably what best describes the new gay anthem.” Also adding to the grittiness of Out.Anthems 2 is the album’s host, Johnny McGovern – star of LOGO’s The Big Gay Sketch Show – widely known as The Gay Pimp. “I was intrigued by the idea from the beginning but had no idea it would come out as unique as it did,” says Ricardo! “Johnny is hilarious and fits in perfectly with the album.” From electro to techno, house to hump, Out.Anthems 2,




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Leslie Feist *The Reminder*

Recorded in just two short weeks at La Frette, a 200-year-old manor house on the outskirts of Paris – Leslie Feist's sophomore album, *The Reminder*, is one of those disc's that were simply meant to be. With her live band in tow – comprised of Julian Brown, Bryden Baird and Jesse Baird – and guests Chilly Gonzales, Mocky and Jamie Lidell, Feist (as she prefers to be called) set up shop in the house's dining area and parlor with a piano, vibrophones, organs, guitars and amps. Then the music makers shoved two drum kits against the stained-glass windows and scattered mics like mousetraps around the wood-floored rooms. What emerged from this haphazard recording session is an album so full of life – barking dogs can be heard on some tracks – that you can almost feel the uninhibited bohemian influence as the kick-drum heartbeat bellows from tracks such as "Brady Alexander." Other notable songs include "Sealion," with its cell-phone synth treatment; the ominous "Limit to Your Love," and the singles "My Moon My Man" and "1234." To be embraced by *The Reminder* – as if to be cuddled by Feist herself – is not farfetched; it's simply "how her heart behaves."



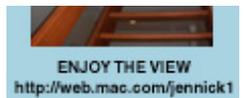
The Cliks *Snakehouse*

As far as fierce female foursomes go, *The Cliks* could kick your girl group's ass. And if given the chance, it probably will. Based in Toronto, this queer quartet of indie rockers challenges stereotypes and breaks down barriers before the first beat booms from its debut disc, *Snakehouse*. True, the lead singer, Lucas, is a transgender man, and, yes, the two guitarists are lesbians, but what really matters here is that these ladies (and gentleman) will turn out a crowd quicker than Ricky Martin can say, "I swear he's just my brother-in-law." Don't believe it? Then follow the hordes of neo-hipsters to your local venue where they're lining up to catch the Ontarian outlaws dropkick conformity in the clavicle. From "Complicated," the ballsy beginning to which implores you to "Fuck your pain away," to "Oh Yeah," *Snakehouse's* first single and current LOGO network favorite, to a cover of J. Tim's "Cry Me a River," *The Cliks* – with its unpretentious, angsty, psychologically disturbed aura – have unleashed one of the first real rock-and-roll records of the year. No matter how much Lithium it might have taken to get there.



Ultra Naté *Grime, Silk & Thunder*

Ah, Baltimore. According to media reports, this working-class city is all crab cakes, crime and chlamydia. But take a closer look and there's much more to the forgotten metropolis – such as *Grime, Silk & Thunder*, *Ultra Naté's* latest album, inspired by the tragically heroic grunge band, Nirvana. Kicking her career into high gear with the smash "Show Me," *Ultra* – a Baltimore native and resident – reached number one on the U.S. dance charts for the first time in 1994.



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In 1998 she returned to the top with "Free," a million-selling international hit single. And if you haven't heard by now, the black beauty is back with another club-banging #1, "Automatic," a radically re-envisioned recording of the 1984 Pointer Sisters' classic. Other noteworthy tracks on Grime, Silk & Thunder – Ultra's fifth album – include the Giorgio Moroder/Grace Jones-inspired "Love's the Only Drug"; the dub-laced "Slow Grind"; and the soul-sweeping, Philly-esque "Getaway." Like Baltimore itself, Ultra's newest release is radiant jewel amid otherwise unrefined surroundings. Unlike Baltimore, you won't need antibiotics to enjoy it.

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