

Wanna” bops along with Santana meets Jon Secada Latin tinged grooves. Popkin’s double and sometimes triple tracked backing vocals provide the perfect foil for himself, especially on “Deeper Sensuality.” *Endless* is a ride worth taking.

-TOM SEMIOLI

The Purrs

The Purrs

Sarathan

Velvet Underground and Jesus and Mary Chain style noise-rock jangle is a style of music that will never grow old or tiresome. It’s simple, it rocks, and while it may offer little in the way of surprises, it’s bound to provide maximum levels of enjoyment, even if the senses are not caught off guard. The Purrs understand this, and make something quite magnificent out of this approach. Yet the variations within that psychedelic three-chord approach are what make this album a winning one. Opener “She’s Gone” contains just the right amount of trippy rock momentum, while “Dreams Our Stuff Is Made Of,” more than just a clever name, descends into gorgeous, dreamy territory, and “Connect the Dots” adds a little bit of raw, garage rock to nice effect. The Purrs’ self-titled album not only lives up to the legacy of those two weighty names dropped at the beginning of this review, but also carries it into the next generation, upholding rock ‘n’ roll tradition, while leaving their own individualistic mark.

-JEFF TERICH

The Rails

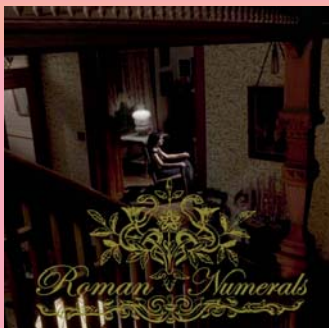
Life’s a Lonely Ride

Independent

After his return from college in 2001, guitarist/vocalist Jeremy Willets teamed up with his high school guitar teacher Dave Doman to form the Rails with drummer Jeff Harmon. The trio’s debut, *Life’s a Lonely Ride*, exudes plenty of indie pop diversity as they exhibit the power and art of balancing sweet melodies and pungent lyrics. Utilizing influences such as the Beatles (“I’m in Love with Misery”), R.E.M. (“Everyone’s Son,” “Feel It”) and Weezer (“Blue Collar Town”). Willets’ thin, reedy voice

gives everything on *Life’s a Lonely Ride* a veneer of off-kilter immediacy, although that may not always be his intention. The Rails have gotten dinged in some quarters for espousing too many styles on its debut, but rather than narrow their focus, it might be more advantageous for the band to simply concentrate on their strengths across their entire musical spectrum.

- BRIAN BAKER



Roman Numerals

Roman Numerals

Anodyne

Some bands get together as a diversionary side project, and Roman Numerals is no exception, except the reason the quartet assembled was to play Joy Division at a Kansas City Halloween party. It turned out to be an astute costume choice as the foursome were so taken with their chemistry together that they decided to try their hands at making original music. Another good decision, as it turns out. With a wealth of indie experience behind them (Season to Risk, Shiner, Dirtnap), Roman Numerals walk a razor line between retro-chic and evolutionary vision as they apply their affection for Joy Division-era synth rock to their compellingly contemporary soundtrack. Sporting a dark dance groove coupled with a visceral indie rock pulse, Roman Numerals channel INXS’s sexy throb (“My Life After Death Pt. II,” “Occupado”), *Heroes*-era Bowie (“Known”), Devo-meets-Red-Noise clockwork pop (“Can We Trust Your Architect?”) and plenty of Ian Curtis-tinged ice-and-fire (“Mrs. Control,” “Induce”). Roman Numerals’ success is due largely to the fact that they use ’70s synth/goth/wave as an inspiration

Sébastien Schuller

“Happiness”

on this playing field, you smiled,
and it made me feel safe

“Dreamy, multi-layered pop music, not unlike Air wrestling in the grass with Radiohead...”
-Music For Robots

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and not an altar, allowing their own post-modern personalities to inform the music as much as their obvious influences.

- BRIAN BAKER

Sebastian Schuller

Happiness

Minty Fresh

French percussionist turned multi-instrumentalist Sebastian Schuller has found a way to combine ethereal, moody music with an organic, folk-like approach. Running the gamut from warm to downright spine-tingling, his US debut *Happiness* is an experience in electronically-enhanced acoustics. Lots of clever keyboard sounds, along with Schuller’s James Blunt-with-a-French-accent tenor vocals. Perhaps he’s a fan of fellow Frenchmen Air, as his songs are similar, though less danceable. Schuller could have added his work to the hauntingly beautiful *Virgin Suicides* film soundtrack, especially tracks like the melancholic “Weeping Willow”

or the keyboard-heavy “Edward’s Hand.” “Tears Coming Home” is the most upbeat of the tracks, with a faster tempo and an almost-pop melody, though Schuller still manages to keep it all other-worldly with harpsichord keys and spacey electronic backgrounds.

-PENELOPE BIVER

The Shakes

The Rise and Fall of Modern Living

Teenacide

There isn’t a single sound or influence that the Shakes won’t explore on *The Rise and Fall of Modern Living*, the L.A. collective’s third release. Drenched in the wiggled-out Farfisa, jangly guitar pop of the ’60s, the Shakes suggest everything from the Kinks’ vaudevillian pop (“On My Street,” “Modern Living”) to the Beatles’ early mop-shaking rawness (“The Greeter of Sanborn Ave) to the Move’s sophisticated naïveté (“Dorian Gray”). Those reference points alone would be more than