

Don't Stop the Music

Check out these new albums from established artists. By Kevin Madigan



Ray Davies—*Other People's Lives (V2)*

Ray Davies has always had his own particular view of the world, an observer of the absurd and of the eccentricities of those around him. Founder of the Kinks more than forty years ago, he is just now getting around to his first solo album, a fine piece of work that easily ranks with his best efforts. The sharp wit and keen eye are still very apparent, as in "Next Door Neighbor," in which he tells of Mr. Jones, who robs a bank in order to support two different women, and a Mr. Smith, who displays his many frustrations by flinging a television out the window. "All She Wrote" is a funny tale of rejection taken in stride, dismissing his ex-lover's letter by calling it "a few killer lines to get my goat" and then quotes her description of his replacement: "My new man is a vegetarian / he laughs a lot / not like you."

Typical of Davies' familiar style is "Stand Up Comic," a clever diatribe on English culture. Best of the bunch is "Is There Life After Breakfast," an attempt to give hope to those who lack it. Is there life after the Kinks? Very much so.

Various Artists—*Our New Orleans (Nonesuch)*

Quite a few benefit albums have emerged since the awful hurricane season of 2005, but this is the cream of the crop. It features musicians who live (or lived) in New Orleans itself, and songs that were born there too, and it all underscores the vast richness of the city's musical tradition. The brilliant producer and pianist Allen Toussaint kicks it off with an inspired rendition of "Yes We Can Can," and it gets better from there. Irma Thomas takes on "Back Water Blues" and Buckwheat Zydeco does "Cryin' In The Streets." Dirty Dozen Brass Band's version of "My Feet Can't Fail Me Now" is joyously uplifting, the horn section carried away by euphoria. Randy Newman's poignant "Louisiana 1927" is here as well, written many years ago and all the more prescient for that.

This album was actually recorded in New York, such is the sorry state of the music industry in New Orleans after Katrina. The accompanying booklet includes remarks from some of these musicians, forced to abandon their homes to face an uncertain future. "We are scattered all over the place," states the Dirty Dozen's Roger Lewis in the liner notes. "Some musicians are not coming back...." But we will always have music in New Orleans. It's a musical city.



The Pixies—*Pixies Sell Out (Rhino DVD)*

An appropriate title, this one. The Pixies sold out practically every night of their huge 2004 reunion tour, which is quite an accomplishment for a long-defunct cult band that never even came close to the mainstream. That they would ever get together again was itself never assumed, as the members squabbled, then lost touch with each other and took up separate endeavors. One of them even became a magician. But stranger things have happened in rock and roll.

This band was never very prolific to begin with: They produced five albums between 1987 and 1991—and that was the end of it. Or so it seemed. Head honcho Frank Black, who looks more like a plumber than a rock musician, embarked upon a fairly solid solo career. Bass player Kim Deal formed the Breeders and sold tons of records.

The bulk of the footage in this collection comes from a festival in France, while the bonus material encompasses concerts in Japan, England, Scotland and the United States. All the better known songs are here, the ones that the late Kurt Cobain claimed were the motivation in forming a little band called Nirvana. This DVD will work wonders for all those people who were unable to get tickets to the tour.



Worthy of Mention: Cat Power is in fact Chan Marshall, an Atlanta favorite who sings beautifully. Her latest album of new material is *The Greatest (Matador)*. Local rock act Collective Soul has released a DVD and two-CD set titled *Home: A Live Concert Recording with the Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra (El Music Group)*. Beth Orton, takes long breaks between albums, but she is always worth the wait. This soulful, moody Brit has *Comfort of Strangers (Astralwerks)* out now. ➔

Kevin C. Madigan is an Atlanta-based freelance writer.