

New Discoveries

Nicky Click, Rose Melberg and Diana Jones. | By Margaret Coble



Chrissie Hynde

EDITOR'S PICK

Pirate Radio, The Pretenders (Rhino):

American expat Chrissie Hynde formed the Pretenders in London in the late 1970s, and the entire history of the rockin' quartet is played out in this impressive, career-spanning, four-disc-and-one-DVD box set. Including 81 songs and 19 videos, the five-hour set includes British TV performances (with a much younger but still tough Hynde) and unreleased concert recordings. The best part — besides being both lulled and agitated by Hynde's show-stopping lyricism and guttural informality — is the band's cover of Morrissey's "Every Day Is Like Sunday," which originally appeared on the *Boys on the Side* soundtrack. (rhino.com)

— Diane Anderson-Minshall

After 15 years of writing about music, I get really excited when something new, well, genuinely excites me. Believe me: It doesn't happen all that often. So even though Diana Jones and Rose Melberg are not new to the music industry, they are new to me — and probably to many of you — and I can't stop playing their albums. And Nicky Click, well, she just puts a smile on my face.

You're Already a Member, Nicky Click (Crunks Not Dead)

Nicky Click is a part of a collective of underground electro-hop artists — along with frequent collaborators Scream Club — based in Olympia, Wash., who have begun a new, queer, indie record label called Crunks Not Dead. Also a DJ, filmmaker, multimedia artist and community organizer, Click identifies as a femme and a feminist. Though her music career is a fairly new endeavor, begun with a used drum machine a little more than a year ago, her ascent has been swift, culminating in an opening slot last winter for Lady Sovereign in Europe. Click has just returned from a spring American tour with Scream Club, and her debut album has just been released. It's filled with electro-synthpop jams that are at once silly, righteous, disarming and totally entertaining. From the feminist "Don't Call Me Baby" to the femme-on-femme roller-skating love ditty "Two Femme Girls" and the sex-as-exercise ode "I Wanna Exercise" (*sic*), Click's ironic, droning voice is hypnotic — before you know it, you'll be singing and dancing along. Catch Click live if you have the chance; the memory of her flitting around the stage in her stripy leotard always lifts my spirits. (nickyclick.com, crunksnotdead.com)

Cast Away the Clouds, Rose Melberg (Double Agent)

Some might recognize Rose Melberg's name from her many former indie and punk rock projects that stretch back as far as 1992, including Tiger Trap, the Softies, Go Sailor and Gaze. From her straight-outta-high-school beginnings in the early '90s indie pop scene to her first solo album, *Portola*, in 1998 and her last Softies recording in 2001, Melberg has been a prolific and poetic songwriter with an angelic voice and a personal, confessional lyrical style. For the past five years she's been on hiatus, having taken time out to start a family in a small Canadian lakeside town. *Cast Away the Clouds* is a welcome and triumphant return. It's hypnotic, moody and introspective in a way I haven't experienced since my late '80s days of obsessively



Nicky Click

listening to Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt's early solo albums. The lead-off track, "Take Some Time," is classic Softies mellow-acoustic-guitar-and-piano fare, while cuts like "Irene" venture to be a little more up-tempo via bouncy piano work. The entire album definitely fits into the sad and melancholy category, but it's still a joy to listen to from beginning to end. I dare you not to become addicted to this. (doubleagentrecords.com/rose)

My Remembrance of You, Diana Jones (New Song Recordings)

Hands-down, this is one of my favorite new bluegrass and Americana albums in a long time. Diana Jones has a distinctive, somewhat muted alto voice, and her music blends folk and roots influences with a pop sheen that makes it accessible to all without watering it down. Her lyrics cover themes everyone can relate to — love, loss and redemption — and while it's not necessarily obvious from reading them, Jones is an out lesbian. She has built a solid following on the folk and women's music festival circuits (this August she'll be at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival), and with this release, she's sure to garner more attention from critics, public radio and television. Every song's a winner here, but check out the lead-off, "Pretty Girl," which shares the sexual abuse story of one of Jones' friends, and "Pony," a poignant tale about the injustices suffered by Native children at the hands of the U.S. government in the 1800s, on which Ferron sings harmony. Just beautiful. (dianajonesmusic.com) ■