IN STORES BY KEVIN MATHEWS

CD reviews

Damon Albarn has aged and so has his music. PHOTO: AP

Everyday Robots (Damon Albarn)
The Blur frontman finally releases his first solo album (under his own name) and, to these ears, it comes across as one of those arty, sophisticated world-music song cycles that was made popular in the mid '80s by the likes of Sting, Peter Gabriel and Paul Simon. By and large, Everyday Robots is a downbeat albeit atmospheric affair, without much concession to commercial appeal. Songs such as the title track, afro-centric Mr Tembe and the quirky Parakeet might be aimed at the more geeky young music listener but, overall, Everyday Robots seems targeted for an older audience — perhaps fans of Blur and to a lesser extent, Gorillaz. The tracks You And Me, Heavy Seas Of Love (both with Brian Eno), Hollow Pond, and The Selfish Giant (featuring Bat For Lashes) eschew typical pop structures for the more unconventional and thus might require an erudite mind to fully appreciate. ★★★☆☆

Macroscope (The Nels Cline Singers)
Nels Cline is probably best known as the current guitarist of alternative-rock outfit WILCO. What is less known is Cline has been a critically acclaimed jazz guitarist for decades now. Macroscope is the fifth album from Cline's jazz-fusion instrumental group The Nels Cline Singers, which is composed of Cline, bassist Devin Hoff and drummer Scott Amendola (yes, there are no singers!). For lovers of the freeform and rock versions of jazz, Macroscope is a godsend. This inventive trio manages to bring together diverse threads of modern jazz that emphasise virtuosity and an experimental condition within the rock and even avant-garde formats. Sometimes even progressive rock elements (such as King Crimson references) come into play, evident on Canales' Cabeza and Seven Zed Heaven. Overall, Macroscope is an essential purchase for all jazz-fusion lovers. ★★★★☆

Indie Cindy (Pixies)
Longtime fans of the reformed alternative rock legends Pixies would have picked up their earlier three EPs (designated 1, 2 and 3, respectively) released in 2013 and early 2014. So who is this new release intended for? After all, Indie City (the album) merely compiles the 12 tracks found on the three EPs. Now consisting of Black Francis, Joey Santiago, Dave Lovering and a slew of female session bassists, Pixies are a pale shadow of their iconoclastic selves, and these types of decisions remain mystifying and potentially alienating to their loyal fan base. The music itself has more or less been commented on and the consensus is that the better moments lie in instances where the songs sound like the best bits of Black Francis' solo career (e.g. What Goes Boom & Greens and Blues) or closely resembling the Pixies' latter days (e.g. Indie Cindy & Andro Queen). Only if you must have the complete collection. ★★☆☆☆

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