



[THE REVIEWS]

7 THE JACKSONS DESTINY/TRIUMPH (EPIC/LEGACY)

The last two listenable Jacksons albums are being reissued together, and the infectious parts showcase the group's unified sound before Michael bailed. The bonus material is sparse—but it's more than the cassettes had.

2 NELS CLINE COWARD (CRYPTOGRAMOPHONE)

If you've seen a recent Wilco show, you know the guitar fireworks Nels Cline brings. On this instrumental solo album, Cline goes deeper, veering from avant-garde jazz to noise. It's not all accessible, but when he locks into a groove on "Thurston County," it's bliss.

3 ANDREW BIRD NOBLE BEAST (FAT POSSUM)

Call it an audio bubble bath: warm, soothing, and, at first, a little sleep-inducing. Yet the multi-instrumentalist's pop symphonies can be sweeping ("Souverian") and even driving ("Fitz and the Dizzyspells"). No one sounds like this guy—and that's a compliment.



4 LILY ALLEN IT'S NOT ME, IT'S YOU (CAPITOL)

The sassy, bubblegum-ska girl is gone. Lily Allen's sophomore album is more skeptical—and musically ambitious. But her wit remains razor-sharp as she slams prescription-drug abusers (the electric "Everyone's At It") and bad lovers (the boot-stomping "It's Not Fair").

5 ANIMAL COLLECTIVE MERRIWEATHER POST PAVILION (DOMINO)

Given the praise, you'd think these alt-popsters were the second coming of the Beatles and Jesus. Their eighth album almost lives up to the hype. It's a melange of hot musical genres, but it's their most cohesive work yet.

[Q&A]

Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos

■ The Scottish dance-punk band's frontman is rock's answer to James Bond: suave, nattily dressed, slightly mysterious, and a connoisseur of fine food and drink. Here, Kapranos talks about his after-hours missions and the musical skeleton in his closet. *Matt Hendrickson*

Q:

Your new album, *Tonight: Franz Ferdinand*, is all about nocturnal debauchery. What's your idea of a big night out?

Have you had a cuddle recently?

You guys recorded *Tonight* with some pretty morbid instruments.

You wrote a food column for the *Guardian*, then collected the pieces into a book, *Sound Bites*. Any more culinary writing in your future?

A:

The best is when you embrace being lost. And the next thing you know, the dawn is coming through the chink in the curtain and you're ready for a cuddle.

I'll never tell. But we did this word-of-mouth gig in a basement in Glasgow, and in the middle of the third song, the power went out on the whole block. It got a little messy after that.

Our guitarist Nick [McCarthy] and I went to an auction and bought these boxes of bones. We put the skeleton together—Nick was clapping its hands together, and I had a clavicle I rattled around the pelvis. It wasn't macabre—it was just objects that made a good sound. There were no Ouija boards involved.

I'll continue to write, but I'm done with food. I had offers to host these weird cooking shows. No fucking way! I'm a rock-and-roller! I can't be standing there baking a cake for the telly!