

[Q&A]

Neko Case

The alluring alt-country siren—and part-time New Pornographer—can be a lot looser and raunchier than her soaring voice and soul-searching lyrics would have you think. Here, she talks about her new solo album, *Middle Cyclone*; sodomy jokes; and Rumpelintz. *Matt Hendrickson*



Q:

Don't take this the wrong way, but your lyrics conjure up images of blood.

How do you lighten the mood in concert?

Through the years, you've played punk rock, power pop, and country noir. What's your favorite type of music to listen to?

You're crouching on top of a Dodge Cougar wielding a sword on the cover of your new album—what does that symbolize?

A:

I like blood. Blood keeps us alive. But I don't think the new songs are as dark as some in the past. After my last record [2006's *Fox Confessor Brings the Flood*], I swore I would never write love songs, but what did I do on the new one? Wrote a bunch of love songs. Granted, they're not typical love songs—they're a bit twisted.

I don't subscribe to that rock-and-roll mythology "I'm an artist. You will listen quietly to my masterpiece." That's bullshit. So I tell a few sodomy jokes between songs to ease the tension. I'm not really family-friendly with my jokes. Some people give me shit, but if they heckle enough, I just tell them shut the fuck up and throw 'em out.

Lately I've been listening to a lot of classical, a lot of Rimsky-Korsakov. There's just something about the Russians. They're good at being dramatic while being quiet.

Isn't that hilarious? It's like those Rumpelintz ads—all I needed was a bustier. I guess it's a symbol of being rad. Or in my case, trying to be rad.

[THE REVIEWS]

1 **M. WARD HOLD TIME**
(MERGE)

Maybe M. Ward is helpless without a muse. The folk troubadour's follow-up to his collaboration with Zooey Deschanel is a phoned-in effort full of whispery songs. The lone redemption comes with "Oh Lonesome Me," on which he lends the mike to another songstress, Lucinda Williams.

2 **TELEPATHE DANCE MOTHER**
(IAMSOUND)

It's hardly revolutionary for a Brooklyn band to mine the New Wave archives. But Telepathe's debut feels fresh: They bring TV on the Radio-style cacophony, Cocteau Twins-esque vocals, and their own dazzling electronica to winning tracks like "So Fine" and "In Your Line."

3 **HEARTLESS BASTARDS THE MOUNTAIN**
(FAT POSSUM)

With a voice that recalls Janis Joplin, the Bastards' ringleader, Erika Wennerstrom, is a dy-

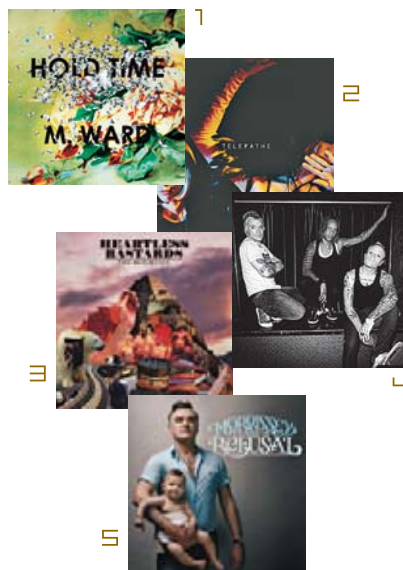
namo. Her revolving cast of backing musicians adds garage-rock climaxes, especially on "Out at Sea" and "Early in the Morning," without ever outshining the unstoppable frontwoman.

4 **THE PRODIGY INVADERS MUST DIE**
(TAKE ME TO THE HOSPITAL/COOKING VINYL)

Though the album is billed as a reunion of the group's mid-nineties-heyday lineup, it's really a chance for studio wizard Liam Howlett to steal the limelight once again. On "Warrior's Dance" and the title cut, he dominates, serving up a thrill ride of break-beat techno and crushing metal guitar.

5 **MORRISSEY YEARS OF REFUSAL**
(ATTACK/LOST HIGHWAY)

After years in Los Angeles, the master of melancholy is finally channeling the Southern California vibes—in a punky sort of way. With anthemic guitars and chunky bass lines, Mozzer sounds like an English version of Social Distortion—only with better lyrics and that operatic voice.



PHOTOGRAPH BY RAHAV SEGEV/RETNA LTD.