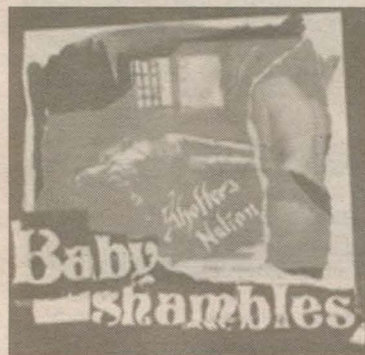


# Top November albums

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Babyshambles  
*Shatter's Nation*

If you have even a slight interest in troubled Brit poet Pete Doherty or his musical prowess, then you'll thoroughly enjoy the second Babyshambles album, *Shatter's Nation*.

The album cover is based on a painting by Henry Wallis called "The Death of Chatterton," which depicts the suicide of the 18th century poet at age 17. It's a heavy image to accompany the album, but Babyshambles' new, well-manicured sound helps to lighten the tone.

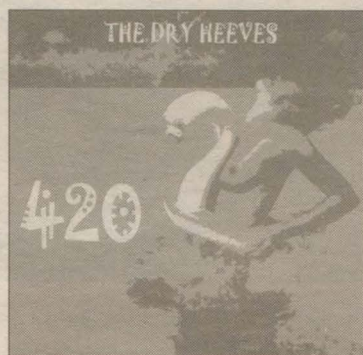
"Carry On Up The Morning" starts up this soap-opera album with classic Babyshambles distortion, filthy guitar and lyrics that run, "In the morning where does all the pain go? / Same place the fame goes / Straight to your head."

Doherty is wearing his heart on his sleeve again on this album, which isn't a bad thing. Too many crusty, bitter old British rock critics are too jaded to feel Doherty's lyrics and have stopped listening to the music.

*Shatter's Nation* was produced by big-shot label Parlophone, and thus loses some of the appeal of the refreshing, crack-addicted performance, production and sound that came with *Down in Albion*.

The lyrics are derived from Pete Doherty's self-pity, as he complains, "They sold my name after they stole my shame." Whatever shame is connected with Doherty's name is exclusively a product of the man, not of the band and their music.

The world should close its eyes and listen to these songs. That's why we buy records – to listen to the music, not to bitch about what the musician does on the weekends.



The Dry Heeves  
*420*

Don't feel bad if you've never heard of The Dry Heeves. After you've been throttled by their 10th album, *420*, you may feel like your brain and eardrums have been dosed with LCD.

The Dry Heeves' album may be the most diverse yet linear album of all time. Or at least the most diverse album to come out of Meat Cove, Cape Breton.

The album is 17 tracks of hard-ass dirt rock, piss and punch punk rock, and a few classic covers.

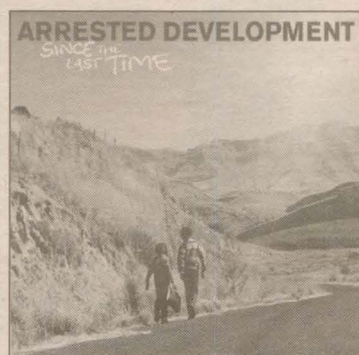
The Dry Heeves have managed to create a serious masterpiece of impressive music. The band is trying to make a strong social comment with *420*.

"Acid Casualty" is an 18-minute experimental, distorted electro mix, with a long clip of commentary on conspiracy theories involving John Lennon, The Beatles and the Kennedys.

Songs like "Oxycontin," which is the source of a growing drug problem in Cape Breton, "F.T.W." (Fuck The World), which is mostly made up of incoherent cursing a pirate would admire, and "Son of a Gun," in which the band calls the Bush family a "killing machine," show that these experimentalists have something to say.

But The Heeves like to have fun and keep it Meat. "MySpace Girl" is a song about a girl name Josette from Meat Cove. A lonely lighthouse keeper falls in love with her and urges her to come light the light and use his free high-speed internet to download MP3s. It's a real sweet moment in lyrical history.

I don't think you have to be stoned to enjoy *420*. Just be prepared to be blown away.



Arrested Development  
*Since The Last Time*

If you hear "Arrested Development" these days, you probably associate it with a witty two-bit comedy show on Fox.

But check yourself and perk your ears up, because it might be the sound of the legendary hip hop crew's new album, *Since The Last Time*.

This is the first album of fresh material in over 12 years for the legendary apostles of the positive hip hop movement.

Arrested Development formed in 1992 and exploded onto the scene with a Grammy Award for their first album, from which came the likes of "Mr. Wendal," the inspiring hip hop ballad about a homeless man.

This album is reflective of the band's ambition to spread the love and good vibes. They played with the Black Eyed Peas this summer in Jerusalem to promote peace and celebrate freedom of expression. Their single "Miracles" is a wicked, up-beat mix preaching achievement.

Arrested Development slows things down with the stylistic funk beats in "Heaven," throwing down rhymes about keeping the faith and making it to the pearly gates in due time.

*Since The Last Time* keeps up its positive attitude with "Sunshine" and "Stand," in classic Arrested Development, early 90s R&B style. They break it down in "Inner City," a killer beat with quick rapping about living in the hood and getting things done the best way you can.

It's a stick-it-to-'em hip hop album with some slightly cheesy R&B mixes, but it's good to see these positive musical figures back at work, keeping our heads bobbing and faces smiling.



The Cansecos  
*Juices!*

If you're into this Toronto-based electro-dance synthesizing crew, then you know The Cansecos got sick this summer.

They released, for the first time in music history, a premix. *Juiced!* is a remixed rendition of their upcoming studio sophomore album, *Juices!* They released *Juiced!* for free on their website, which set their fanbase ablaze.

They are said to be on their way to replacing The Rapture as the new 'it' group in dance rock, and were set to release *Juices!* on Nov. 20 on Up-per Class Recordings.

This experimental, hypnotizing album from Bill Halliday and Gareth Jones features all the finer points of cut-and-paste sampling, taped together with jumpy pop melodies.

It's like a high school dance, with playful humour, awkward analog mixes and drunken, digital blissfulness.

"Nothing New to You" makes me wish I was in the backseat of my best friend's station wagon, red-eyed and cruising around at 17.

In their lyrics they ask, "Is this the calm of the storm or is this combat?" and say, "The end of the world is nothing knew to you." However, they mix in a slap-bass funk beat with digital cuts and synthesized vocals, making it easy to jive to such melancholy motifs, and remind us that, "It's not as bad as it seems."

*Juices!* was polished up at Abbey Road Studios by Adam Nunn, the mastering engineer for Radiohead and a bunch of other massive U.K. bands.

*Juiced!* is a fun, fresh sound for the Canadian techno band. You should check it out, especially if you're from Toronto and like dance music.



Active Planet  
*Urban Hustle*

If you're trying to burn off that Freshmen 15 or throw a really 'hip' dinner party for artsy, well-to-do types, then this album is for you.

*Urban Hustle*, labeled as "party-up/fitness," is an instrumental album produced and composed by Stephen Outhit and Dave Anderson.

It's basically a jazz/funk album with catchy, classical jazz sax and buzzing jam licks. It would be great for powerwalking around Spring Garden in the summertime to, wearing spandex and neon shades.

*Urban Hustle* contains the sounds of some of Halifax's most notorious minstrels, such as jazz saxophile Bucky Adams, Dani Oore of Gypsophilia, Kamran Abdi of Dr. dFunk and percussionist Keith Mullins, who plays with Matt Mays.

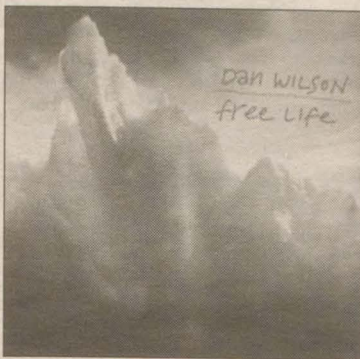
It was mixed by Jorun Bombay, who's worked with Buck 65, Skratz Bastid and Universal Soul.

What a tantalizing mix of musical stir-fry. It's hot like stir fry and sweet like teriyaki sauce, but instead of making you sleepy from MSG, it makes you hyper and horned up like a monkey on ecstasy.

*Urban Hustle* is 10 tracks of what could be old, cheesy jazz/funk from your parents' collection, but the mixes are new-age and phat, and the riffs are tight.

Forget the dinner parties and workout sessions. Cover your walls in tinfoil, get a strobe light, pass out some vitamins and dance to *Urban Hustle*.





Dan Wilson  
*Free Life*

Dan Wilson has been a songwriter for almost two decades. He received a Song of the Year Grammy Award in 2007 for a song he wrote for the Dixie Chicks called "Not Ready to Make Nice." Another song he wrote, "Closing Time," performed by Semisonic, was nominated for a Best Rock Song Grammy back in 1999.

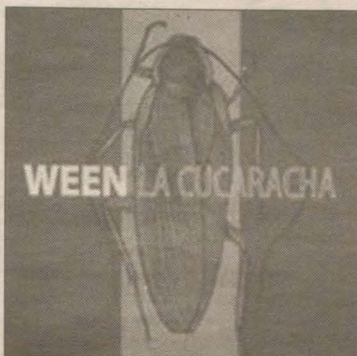
*Free Life* is Wilson's first solo project, and it's easy to tell he knew what he was doing when he made it. I have never before heard a musician who sounds so comfortable in his songs. His lyrics, voice and music feel like free entities, with Wilson at the reigns.

The first song, "All Kinds," warms your heart with a melodic chorus and touching lyrics that are "all kinds of beautiful."

This is definitely an adult easy listening album, but the energy and warmth in Wilson's tone and imagery make *Free Life* feel more like a fairytale story read by a child.

The title track, "Free Life," sounds like a country song, with finger-picked guitar, brooding piano and dragging slide riffs. The song asks us about where we're going and what we're "going to spend our free life on?" The song tells us to "fall in love again with music as our guide / We'll raise our ready hands, and let go for the ride."

This album is truly beautiful and will make you wish you could sit out on a rock in Peggy's Cove and watch the sunset. Speaking of which, that's a great idea.



Ween  
*La Cucaracha*

Ween's new album, *La Cucaracha*, starts with a Latin-sounding tune called "Fiesta," in which they break their no-horn rule and party like they're in a 60s surfer musical.

*La Cucaracha* was recorded in a decrepit, 200-year-old farm house in Ween's hometown of New Hope, PA. Whatever asbestos they inhaled during the production of the album definitely worked.

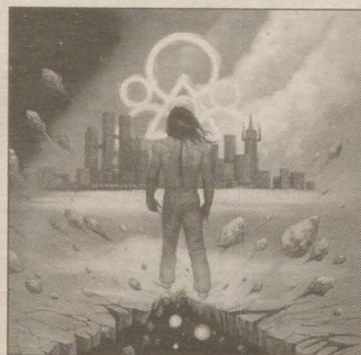
*La Cucaracha* is a more mature effort, but still has the band's quirky lyrics and sounds, albeit slightly more refined and linear, as in the song "Blue Balloon."

"Friends" is a nice, eurotrash-type techno tune, with corny pop lyrics that run, "A friend's a friend who knows what being a friend is... friends in life are special do you want me as your special friend?"

Ween is indeed special! You just can't get sick of a band that has been around for 23 years and continues to surprise you with their shapeless style.

*La Cucaracha* goes from hard rock, with shameless cursing in "With My Own Bare Hands," to the sweet, cuddly sound of "Lullaby," a song you either want to put your young one to bed to, or listen to as you tie the noose.

Ween never delivers anything conventional or politically correct, and that's why you'll like this album.



Coheed and Cambria  
*No World For Tomorrow*

I must say, the cheesy, comic book-style portrait on the cover of this album by Ken Kelly really doesn't do this band justice.

A shirtless, long-haired hero of admirable build stands in front of an exploding crater, looking at a futuristic city, over which looms a mysterious symbol in the sky.

The concept album *No World For Tomorrow* marks the end of a saga of albums that spin the tale of Claudio Kilgannon, the main character who is avenging the death of his parents (Coheed and Cambria) in something called the "Amory Wars."

The once-indie band from New York City has latched onto the mainstream media. They like to consider themselves progressive, but most often get the label of 'emo' spat at them.

They have a generic look and an unfortunately popular vocal sound, but Travis Stever absolutely humps the guitar to death with his skill.

Lead singer and guitarist Claudio Sanchez's vocals are comparable to those of Bruce Dickinson from Maiden. These days, bangers just wear tighter jeans and paint their nails.

*No World For Tomorrow* has stunning, spellbinding guitar riffs and hooks, but near the middle of the album it gets stale.

As the finale of a tetralogy, this album isn't as dramatic as it could be. It rises and falls and leaves you feeling unsettled.