

extra. EXTRA



JOEL SHAPIRA

In Essence

In this day and age, a solo-jazz guitar record is unique. And this one is also superb. Shapira displays a large chord vocabulary, great sense of time, technique, and soul to burn on standards and new tunes associated with the likes of Wayne Shorter and Joe Henderson. Played on a hollow-body or nylon-string acoustic, all 12 cuts are keepers. — **JH**



COURTNEY BARNETT AND KURT VILE

Lotta Sea Lice

It was a matter of time before we saw a collaboration between the reigning king and queen of laid-back lo-fi. The result meets even the most grandiose expectations from fans of either or both; intermingling of the principals' always entertaining story songs and wordplay, impossibly laconic vocals, and guitar work ranging from jangle to twang to the louder, darker end of the indie-rock guitar spectrum. — **DP**



THE NATIONAL

Sleep Well Beast

Cincinnati-reared/Brooklyn-based The National doesn't produce albums at a torrid pace (seven since 2001). Recorded in multi-instrumentalist Aaron Dessner's home studio with no clock staring over their shoulders, the indie rockers' latest is more textured than predecessors. And while guitar work is accentuated in some places and curbed in others, it's still immediately recognizable as The National. — **DP**



KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD

Lay It On Down

Shepherd's eighth studio album mines his stylistic corner of the room, marrying blues-rock, crowd-pleasing hooks, and savvy Stratocaster wrangling. "Nothing But The Night," "Diamonds & Gold," "Baby Got Gone," and "She's \$\$\$" deliver in spades. Shepherd's range includes the country gospel "Hard Lesson Learned" and the heart-tugging ballad "Louisiana Rain." — **OJ**



SO-CAL ROCKET DYNAMICS

Antisocialite

This high-energy, defiantly guitar-centric outfit has an uncluttered style on display through 16 slices of sharp-toothed pop. "They Have It Coming" lands between Elvis Costello and the Count Five. Matt Britton's white Gretsch may be out front, but the band's minimal instrumentation means everyone gets heard, making for a rocking good time. — **RA**



THE GRASCALS

Before Breakfast

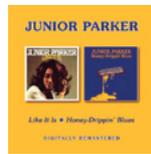
This band can really pick 'em — in every sense. Somehow, they find tunes like the chilling "Sleepin' With The Reaper" that seem tailor-made, and write originals like the breakneck instrumental "Lynchburg Chicken Run" from fiddler Adam Haynes and mandolinist Danny Roberts. And they don't spotlight individual members, but instead showcase how a peerless band works in ensemble. — **RA**



LARRY NEWCOMB QUARTET WITH BUCKY PIZZARELLI

Living Tribute

Newcomb recorded his latest as a tribute to various artists and people, including the fella who plays deft rhythm guitar on seven of the cuts. And to say Pizzarelli just plays rhythm doesn't do him justice; his comping on "I Remember You" is a masterpiece unto itself. He's wonderful throughout, as is Newcomb's swinging soloing. The is a superb session. — **JH**



JUNIOR PARKER

Like It Is/Honey-Drippin' Blues

Why Parker wasn't a star during the late-'60s blues revival is a mystery, even taking into account his 1971 death at 39. Elvis covered his Sun sides, he segued into uptown blues, and even covered Willie Nelson and Beatles material. This excellent two-fer from '67 and '69 features notable guitarist sidemen Reggie Young and Tommy Cogbill and bassists Chuck Rainey and Mike Leech. — **DF**



RYAN CARRAHER — ERIK VAN DAM

Raineater

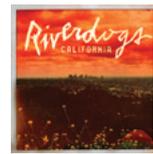
Guitarist Carraher wastes no time in moving to the next phase of his artistry. Using last year's *Vocturnal* as a leaping-off point, he and saxophonist Van Dam explore their creative muse — avant-garde, free-form jazz. Fully improvisational, the duo masterfully compose enthralling musical conversations in real time. — **OJ**



MARY BLACK

By The Time It Gets Dark: 30th Anniversary Edition

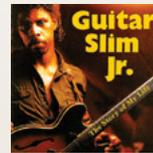
Black has the type of voice that makes guitarists envious. An interpreter (of Richard Thompson, Ewan McColl, Sandy Denny) rather than writer, one of Ireland's premier singers has an expressiveness to match her amazing instrument. She retired from touring, but not before adding "Moon River" to the re-release of this '87 album featuring the tasteful guitar of producer Declan Sinnott. — **DF**



RIVERDOGS

California

Vivian Campbell's post-Dio/pre-Def Leppard band reunites original members Rob Lamothe, Nick Brophy, and Marc Danzeisen. This album is packed with '90s-style power rock, anthemic flourishes, and Campbell's blazing Les Paul tones. Lamothe's bluesy West Coast crooning, Danzeisen's flawless groove, and Campbell's sense of taste, melody, and fire, makes it a triumphant return. — **OJ**



GUITAR SLIM, JR.

The Story Of My Life

Maybe it was the formidable shoes of his father, Eddie "Guitar Slim" Jones, that caused the son to seek anonymity, even after a Grammy nomination. But this auspicious 1988 debut (finally on CD) reveals an impassioned singer and guitarist, whether covering his dad's songs or Tyrone Davis' soul standard "Can I Change My Mind." One hopes this will spur a comeback. — **DF**