

## Sunday

### Corinne Bailey Rae ★★★★★

#### The Sea/EMI

Sure, this album would be fine for the 2am part of Sunday most of us call Saturday night as it's got plenty of steamy R&B numbers that could help you seal the deal with that special someone you just met hours ago (note the Prince-like squealing on "Closer"). But the sweet jazzy ballads like "I'd Do It All Again" and "I Would Like To Call It Beauty" are great for soothing your way into a coffee-and-paper morning. Then there are the shuffling rhythms and piano sprinkled



melodies of "Feels Like The First Time;" the jangly '70s-theme-show-meets-Edie-Brickell "Paris Nights/New York Mornings;" and the surf-rocky "The Sea" to end the day and get you

ready to bop into a new week. Smart lyrics, fascinating arrangements, tantalizing variety and, oh, that wise and lovely voice. Any day's a good day with Corinne Bailey Rae.—Michael Franco

## Monday

### Melody Gardot ★★★★★

#### The One and Only Thrill (Deluxe Version)/Decca

The comparisons are tempting: Amy Winehouse, Eva Cassidy, Laura Nyro, Norah Jones, Nina Simone. Yet while Philadelphia native Melody Gardot's voice might have shades of all these super-chanteuses, it's also an entity unto itself—and it's entirely, utterly captivating. "My One and Only Thrill" is moody, lush and cinematic—the kind of song you could imagine as the last number at a '40s-era Berlin cabaret. The vibe-filled and sparkly "Les étioles" (sung in purring, feel-good French) dares you not to smile.

And her sax-and-samba-soaked take on “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” is guaranteed



to add color to an otherwise blue Monday. It's also the only remake on the album, even though all the compositions sound like they were written by the jazz masters

of yore—especially “Your Heart Is Black As Night.” Guaranteed to turn your flat into a smoky, sultry speakeasy.—MF

# MEDIA

## I-S+

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### Muse ★★★★★

**The Resistance / Warner**



They don't really make music like this anymore—and that's the strength of this, the first album from power glam rockers Muse in three years. The songs here are big—both musically and lyrically. Words like “the wavelength grows/coercive notions re-evolve/a universe is trapped inside a tear/it resonates to the core” burst through thick synth, mammoth drums, roaring electric guitars and pounding pianos—all delivered in Matthew Bellamy's never-shy voice. The tracks here might more aptly be referred to as compositions in the style of Queen (to whom Muse are oft compared), Queensryche and Rush. In fact, the album is actually filled with Rush-like paranoia about overthrowing The System (see opening track “Uprising”) and getting our props from “Them.” Nowhere is the compositional style more obvious than on the final three tracks that wrap the album, all part of a “symphony” entitled “Exogenesis” that comes off like a sci-fi soundtrack in search of its film—*Buck Rogers in the 21st Century*? The piece is lush, brooding and grand, with quiet moments of piano and violin opening breathing space in a thick forest of electrically-fueled instrumentation. Aside from the closing symphony, the songs on the album range over delightfully diverse ground: The anthemic “United States of Eurasia” plays with Persian themes; “Resistance” has a rolling U2-like rhythm to it; “Undisclosed Desires” shamelessly channels Depeche Mode (maybe through Flock of Seagulls); and “I Belong To You/Mon Coeur S'Ouvre à Ta Voix” is a Maroon 5-ish romp mixed with patches of 1940s French balladeering à la theater staple, *Cabaret*. What a ride! Muse may draw on the past for their sound, but at least they pull from quality, thoughtful bands that rock—every bit as much as they do.—Michael Franco

Friday

## Real Life Is No Cool ★★★★★

Lindstrøm and Christabelle/ Feedelity/  
Smalltown Supersound

Sometimes on a Friday night, at the end of a long work week, it can be hard to figure out if you want to get wound up for the weekend or if you need to de-stress from a tough five-days. This album, then, will hit the sweet spot. It's got enough beats to keep you grooving, yet the landscape through which they bounce is a shimmering synth-filled chilled candyland of instrumentation. It sort of feels like a giant mirror ball's been broken open and the glittery disco dust is gently falling everywhere on this outing from the Norwegian duo. From the Donna Summer "I Feel Love"-like groove on "Let's Practice" to the deconstructed disco of "Looking For What" this album is bright, filled with fun rhythm and vocal play, and just the thing for a stressed out nine-to-fiver or a just-getting-revved club kid.—Michael Franco



## Rob Thomas ★★☆☆☆

Cradlesong / Atlantic

Finally! Rob Thomas' long-lost album from 1986. Oh. What's that you say? It's not from the '80s? It's just been released? That's funny, because I swear I can hear the influence of the Go-Go's and Starship on that "Real World" track. And, isn't that song where he sings "How do you sleep when a city's burning" a Midnight Oil tune? And we *know* someone from the Scorpions must have had something to do with those guitar riffs in "Still Ain't Over You." Then there's that strange Erasure-like synth-pop background on "Gasoline" and all that Hootie/Uncle Kracker/Sugar Ray jangly stuff thrown in everywhere. It's not really clear why there's so much '80s gunk wedged into Thomas' signature pop-rock

gears on this album, but one thing is certain—it doesn't work. In fact, it doesn't even sound intentional (more like he was subconsciously yearning for big hair high school days and sitting in a pair of parachute pants when he wrote it). When Thomas comes back to the future, though, some tracks do succeed. Interestingly, they're the ones that are the most unadorned and traditionally Thomas-like: "Her Diamonds" is very singable, radio friendly and Matchbox 20-flavored; "Someday" is a decent ballad that is quite tolerable despite its American Idol overtones; and "Getting Late" is a wonderful little folky ballad that ends the album with a redeeming surprise. By far, the best effort on the outing is "Natural", a gritty composition with lots of space, haunting guitars and evocative violins. If Thomas wanted to change his sound, he should have headed further down this path instead of moon-walking back to the '80s.—Michael Franco



Saturday

**Rush** ★★☆☆

**Working Men**



the club kids out doing their club stuff, it's the perfect time to listen to this CD of live Rush tunes. Why? Because you're going to want to play this disc loud. Really

loud. It's easy to roll your eyes at a release of greatest live hits from a band like Rush. After all, a version of the old saw comes to mind: Those who can, do, and those who can't, release greatest hits collections and live shows on DVD. While it indeed might have been nice to have something new from the four-decade-old troupe, there's definitely a pull to this collection. Hearing crowds from all over the world roar out their approval at the first few notes of "Freewill" or actually sing the guitar riff from "YYZ" only serves to make the band's signature power ballads even more powerful.— Michael Franco