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# Music Reviews



**Toad the Wet Sprocket "In Light Syrup"**  
Columbia Records  
Grade: A-

When "fear" became popular, it began. Then the band recorded "dulcinea." After that, all the little things Toad the Wet Sprocket recorded were compiled onto one compact disc. And it was good.

Part of Toad's strength is the fact that the band can write a ballad like you wouldn't believe. But the band's classic guitar sound and insightful lyrics are where it shines.

"In Light Syrup" is a collection of b-sides, songs for compilations and movie soundtracks, songs from international releases and an unreleased track.

Toad has done lots of little things for a lot of films. Their soundtrack credits include "So I Married An Axe Murderer," "Buffy The Vampire Slayer," and the "Friends" soundtrack. And their singles are a pain to find.

All of which make "In Light Syrup" a good idea. Some of their best work is collected here.

"Good Intentions" may not be the Rembrandts' theme song for "Friends," but it also doesn't have such a frantic pace, which is great.

The b-sides are nothing short of beautiful. The three best could be called the "All" trilogy. The first is "All In All" from the "Walk On the Ocean" single. Second is "All Right," which is a gentle ballad from the "Fall Down" single. Best of all is the album's conclusion, "All She Said," which is from the "All I Want" single. They like the word "all," don't they?

"All She Said" is the best song Toad has recorded since "fear" and maybe even before. It begins with a soft guitar and Glen Phillips' voice cooing gently. The song builds and is set to enrapture the ear.

Other top-rate songs include "So Alive" (give a point to the crickets for being in key), "Janitor" (which is reminiscent of "Fall Down" in a way) and "Hope."

"In Light Syrup" could have been called "The Best Uncommon Toad," because it picks the hidden high points of Toad's career over the last few years.

If you like Toad's sound, whether it be the gentle tones of "All I Want" to the menacing desperation of "Fall Down," "In Light Syrup" has something for you.

—Cliff Hicks



**The Softies "It's Love"**  
K Records  
Grade: B

Sometimes it seems as if musical genres can be twisted into huge dialogues, records of experiences within a giant framework of a never-ending story.

If that's the case, then "It's Love" is the aftermath of a huge coke binge that is finally coming to an end. Which, as you might imagine, is not the happiest time to be alive.

Actually, this record might bring someone even lower than narcotics can, for it's the topic of love with which the listener is faced. Even Tim Allen kicked his blow habit, but no one can escape the pain of a former affair.

This is exactly where this duo, led by former Tiger Trap guitarist Rose Melberg, is poised and overflows with intimate sadness. The result, ironically, is rather pleasing. The standard for 14 sweet tracks is beautiful, ethereal female harmonizing blanketing dreamy, clear-channeled guitars.

Melberg wrote the bulk of the album, and handles lead vocals and rhythm, while Jen Sbragia kicks out the warm little solos.

Comparisons to the likes of Velocity Girl, Rebecca Gates and Blast-Off Country Style (minus the hyper jangle) could be made. Despite its differences in direction, this type of girl-pop bears more of a resemblance to the Softies than other similarly outfitted bands.

The natural target for comparison is the Indigo Girls, simply because it's two girls and two guitars. Sorry kids, you were only joking, brother.

There's pop music lurking in their sound nonetheless, and it's kind of annoying. As if love songs weren't cliched enough, the question of sincerity appears midway through the record.

How much suffering do you have to cram into your set list before we have to throw you on the heap of "troubled rockers?"

Whatever the case, the Softies straddle that line carefully, pulling off the sensitivity of the album pretty well. All in all, it's good fodder for nancy-boy mixes that sappy wimps give to their cute, thrift-store girlfriends. Just like the title says, "It's Love," baby.

—Matt Kudlacz



**"Forbidden Hollywood" Original Soundtrack**  
Various  
DGS Records  
Grade: B+

Broadway fans have been laughing for years at Gerard Alessandrini's spoof of the great white way in "Forbidden Broadway." Now movie buffs can join in the fun.

"Forbidden Hollywood" leaves nothing sacred as it spoofs and roasts everyone from Marlene Dietrich to Tom Hanks.

The compact disc, recorded live at Hollywood's Coronet Theater, contains 26 tracks of mudslinging as an art form. Politicians would be proud.

The brunt of the spoofing is given to the 1994 hit "Forrest Gump." "Life is Like a Box of Chocolates," sung to Ray Henderson's classic "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries" starts the roast as a dim-witted Tom Hanks announces that he's moved to Alabama with Robert Zemeckis to become Gump permanently. He also imparts his own movie wisdom as he passes on life's important lessons. Did you know that being a pretty hooker is a good way to fall in love?

Later, Gump returns with his own folk band — Bubba Gump and Jimmy — to sing about the conservative-friendly "Gump, the Magic Movie," sung to the tune of "Puff, the Magic Dragon."

Other Hollywood bigwigs who get burned include the brand-new Dreamworks corporation, Quentin Tarantino and Disney.

The Disney spoofs are probably the most biting. "A Disney World," sung to the tune of "A Whole New World" describes Disney's quest to run the world. And "Stupidcarelessfictional nonsensical-verbosness" describes the stupidity of many of Disney's classic songs — including that Mary Poppins tune with a similarly long name.

But the best of the best has to be "Summer Movies," sung to the classic song from "Grease," "Summer Nights."

"Summer Movies" describes the current state of the summer flicks — sex, violence and lots of things blowing up. Did you know that Mel Gibson didn't wear any underwear under his kilt in last summer's epic "Braveheart"?

Except for a few bombs, such as the spoofs of Marlene Dietrich, Liza Minnelli and Barbra Streisand, "Forbidden Hollywood" is a delightfully irreverent roasting of everything we love about Hollywood.

And if you can't fly out to Hollywood to see the stage version, wait for the movie — it's bound to happen eventually.

—Brian Priesman

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## Sense

Continued from Page 9

Thompson resolutely sits on the stairs and finishes her tea.

Kate Winslet (as sensibility) is almost as convincing while playing Marianne.

Alan Rickman as the tormented Colonel Brandon is the bulwark of this movie.

Hugh Laurie, in a small part as a relative, steals every scene he's in with his economical choice of words and a sincere heart in a world of fickleness.

The film's only weak links were

Grant and a slightly predictable script.

To be blunt, corpses have acted more relaxed than Grant in movies. Even though the excellent period costumes looked slightly uncomfortable, others endured them with a stiff upper lip. Grant just endured them with stiff shoulders.

With "Four Weddings and a Funeral" and "Nine Months" as the crowning glories of his career, one hopes that Grant's next role will prove to be his redemption.

"Sense and Sensibility" is well worth the bucks as long as one ignores Grant. Go see it; just be sure to get a balcony seat.

## The Facts

**Film:** "Sense and Sensibility"

**Stars:** Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant, Alan Rickman, Kate Winslet

**Director:** Ang Lee

**Rating:** PG-13 (subject matter)

**Grade:** B+

**Five Words:** Relatives, social standing, money matter