

## Hartl:

It's time again for the Top 10 CDs of the year, that is to say the most influential albums in my life over the last 12 months, regardless of when they were released. It seemed like slim pickings this year, so I'm counting on my pals to turn me on to something good that I missed. I'm finding that last year's lists show up on my own list this year, so we agree on things at least... and I'm going to send this out to a couple more people to see if we can't get some other opinions in here too. For you newcomers, feel free to compile what CDs rang your bell this year, we need some INPUT here! Here's my top 10 in no particular order:

1.) The Complete In a Silent Way Sessions - Miles Davis. OK. Who wants to start up a rehearsal band to play this way? I'm ready, let's go. A classic from start to finish.

2.) Footprints Live - Wayne Shorter. All the critics hear this and say why didn't Wayne put out a live CD long ago? The answer is, of course, that his previous bands weren't worth recording. For decades, Shorter seemed to be going to central casting in L.A. for his bandmates. He's finally gone acoustic with a band of sympatico jazz artists, reclaiming and redefining a book of original tunes that proves he's our greatest living jazz composer. Compared to almost every other new-music jazz release this year, this is a diamond in a field of zircons.

3.) Up - Peter Gabriel. Ten years since his last original album (which somehow seemed a letdown at the time) comes this new tour and CD. And what a tour! After you got past the fact that Gabriel resembles Ira Einhorn, his concert was the best-staged production I've ever seen, and we caught a work in progress. The CD points back at the old and ahead to the new, and shows that a creative mind doesn't necessarily get conservative with age. Also, this CD doesn't SOUND like anything else I've ever heard, some serious high-tech work brought in service of the tunes is at work here.

4.) A State of Wonder: The Complete Goldberg Variations, 1955 & 1981 - Glenn Gould. Gould's recording career was bookended by his 2 versions of Bach's Goldberg Variations. This set combines the two recordings with a third CD of a Canadian radio interview in which Gould compares the two versions. In addition to incredible music, it's a fascinating look at an artist's development and change in conception on the same material over many years.

5.) His Best - Howlin' Wolf. A couple of months ago I happened to hear Howlin' Wolf on the radio late one night driving home. I never sought out blues artists in

general, but that night I was really struck by the similarity to Beefheart's vocals. I finally picked up this disc, which looked like a good sampling of Wolf's career, and was assembled in celebration of the Chess label's 50th anniversary. Somehow it's just hitting me right on a gut level ever since. How did I ever miss this guy???

6.) The Golden Road - The Grateful Dead. Rhino does themselves proud with a great packaging of the early Dead stuff. This is Exhibit A in understanding what happened in Frisco in the '60's. If you like their early stuff, this is the definitive collection, if you don't, take a pass. But they really made it sound great and packaged it with a LOT of extra stuff to make sense of it all.

7.) Live At Leeds (Deluxe Edition) - The Who. Somehow it seems fitting that this CD spent a lot of time in the player in the year that Entwistle died. I'm pretty tired of the Who and didn't expect much, but hearing them in full throttle with Keith Moon, including a full live version of "Tommy" in addition to the original album, brings back why they mattered in the first place. Face it, they were over when Moon died, so in the wake of Entwistle I really hope they hang it up. This recording was the apex of their playing and influence.

8.) Welcome Home - Jean-Michel Pilc Trio. One night last spring there was a buzz around my school about a French pianist playing at Chris's Jazz Cafe that night. I took a pass on it, and then got this CD and have been kicking my ass ever since. Interesting reinterpretations of tunes and great playing. Check it out while he's still coming up.

9.) überjam - John Scofield Band. OK, maybe it's all jive. Maybe it's a cynical exploitation. But Scofield keeps using modern technology and going for it when most everybody isn't. Sampling has offered up a new method of music construction that the French *musique concrète* only hinted at, and the world of jazz doesn't have even a wild guess what to do with it. Here's some suggestions from Scofield. Yes, it can be done better. But no one has yet.

10.) The Complete Stax/Volt Singles, 1959-1975 (Volumes 1-3) - Various Artists. This is totally over the top, but this is actually a 3-box set group that encompasses 28 CDs and 3 large booklets to present every single these two soul labels put out under their names and the names of their subsidiary companies. I find the longer I'm in music, the longer my attention span gets for music. Or maybe it's just the rise of the CD box set that enables the listener to hear a complete block of an artist's work and get insights on the creative process and development of ideas. Taken as a whole, these boxes are an amazing catalogue of soul in its widest breadth. There's a lot of chaff here, but you have to listen to it all to get the whole

picture. When the aliens come and ask me to show the one thing mankind made that would give reason to sparing the race, these boxes would go out right behind Art Tatum's The Complete Pablo Solo Masterpieces.

### **Honorable mention:**

1.) My own CD-R, Best of Tom Waits by Tom Waits, and also including all the other favorite-cut sets I've been burning to CD-R from the old LPs. These include sets by Ry Cooder, The Move, Steve Miller, and Talking Heads. The record labels aren't doing their job of giving consumers what they want, I've got a whole lot of paid-for vinyl in the basement and a new MOTU 828 digital audio interface and I ain't afraid to use it. These compilations have been influencing me this year a lot as I rediscover these old favorites in new ways.

2.) When I Was Cruel - Elvis Costello. Ok, we're talking guilty pleasure here, but hell, I like the little mean-spirited geek. He's hung in there better than any of his peers, he's experimented album after album (if not as wildly as Neil Young, deeper than anybody else...and I can't imagine Neil getting down with Burt Bacharach, either), and somehow kept a sonic and compositional identity through it all. Plus, he still has a gift for a vivid image in a lyric. In the sonic wasteland that passes for modern pop music, a guy half as good would shine out. This CD is a return to the original band's concept in albums like This Year's Girl and Armed Forces, but takes the ideas deeper and further as well. In that way, Costello has equalled another of my year's honorable mentions,

3.) Dig - Boz Scaggs. Boz does what Elvis did above. Even the most gimmick-driven cuts grew on me. He might make commercial disco music and pseudo-rap on this CD, but underlying it all in the vocals is soulfulness not heard often these days.

### **Dishonorable abuse:**

1.) Directions In Music - Herbie Hancock/Michael Brecker/Roy Hargrove. I was prepared to like this. I wanted to like it. A tribute to Miles Davis and John Coltrane's musical spirit, done by great musicians in touch with the best in jazz. So why do I find it so hard to enjoy this? The modern music machine even taints the well-intentioned sometimes.

2.) Perpetual Motion - Bela Fleck. He's amazing. He's a world class musician toiling with an instrument that most disdain. Here he hits the classical repertoire in a series of duets. And you know what? It STILL is a fucking banjo! A genuine silk purse with the pigmeat still hanging on it.

3.) Joni Mitchell's new set - 2-CD set of orchestral settings of her past work, I don't even know the title of this. Two years ago I played piano in her symphonic tour when it came to Camden (?). Since then, I've thought about that day and the nastiness, pettiness, and bad humor of the touring musicians that were with her as well as her own cigarette-junky resignation vibe. Now she says this is her swan song, she's sick of the music business and wants out. OK. Fair enough. But to end your career with a *double* CD of your former material when one CD wasn't well-received, to use your ex-lover Jaco-wannabe (Larry Klein) yet again when he's been the kiss of death for quality on every project he's graced with his presence, and to use Vince Mendoza for arranger again (good writing, subhuman asshole)? I didn't buy this set, don't intend to, but I've been hearing a lot of the cuts on the radio and almost drive off the road in a narcoleptic stupor when it comes on. So hang it up, Joni, I agree with you. If my career was dependent on shit like this, I'd hang it up too.

## Steve Carl:

I haven't listened to any jazz or rock recordings this year, except for Jim Hall Live, which I finally convert to CD from LP. My focus has been totally on classical music, and for some reason, classical guitar. Quite frankly, I haven't heard anything interesting in jazz and rock in a very long time. The fact that so many of Dave's choices are from the past kind of says something. Or maybe not. So, my list is:

1) Andres Segovia "The Segovia Collection" - a 4 CD set culled from the maestro's 78 year career. 1st disc is concertos, 2nd is Spanish, 3rd is Baroque and Classical, 4th is Bach. I'm so glad I got a chance to see him perform twice.

2) Victor Villadangos "Guitar Music of Argentina" - a collection by composers who are mostly still alive, and whose music really dances. Plus, it's on Naxos, so it's a bargain.

3) Alexander-Sergei Ramirez "Barrios Mangore: Confesion" - John Williams introduced the world to the music of Barrios 20+ years ago. That first album is permanently in my mind, and is the standard that all performances must live up to, in my mind. This is probably the best recording since Williams' first of this composer's music.

4) Enno Voorhorst "J.S. Bach: Guitar Transcriptions" - a first rate performance of Bach music usually not heard on the guitar, including BWV1013, 939, 854, 992,

974 and 1001. Another Naxos release.

5) John Williams "The Magic Box" - (by the way, you can be certain when I say John Williams, I mean the world's greatest classical guitarist and not the world's most over-rated composer). A recording of music from Africa and Madagascar. Besides Williams on guitar, this features Francis Bebey and the African Children's Choir, as well as a first rate group of musicians.

6) Eliot Fisk "Performs Baroque Guitar Transcriptions" - Eliot's version of the Bach "Chaconne" is so amazing, so natural and relaxed, that it just blows my mind.

7) Shostakovich Symphony No. 4, Czecho-Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ladislav Slovak. Another Naxos release. This is the symphony that Shostakovich kept under wraps for 25 years, until Stalin died.

8) Shostakovich String Quartets 3, 4 and Piano Trio 2, Glinka Quartet, Oistrakh Trio, Taneyev Quartet - music of intense emotion from a man who carried a toothbrush and bar of soap in his pocket whenever he walked out the door, in case the KGB picked him up. How could this music not be intense?

9) Bach "Die Kunst der Fugue", Julliard String Quartet - The last piece composed by the greatest composer ever. I picked this CD up at the Julliard String Quartet Concert of this work. I've transcribed Contrapunctus 1 for guitar quartet. If only I could find 3 other guitarists that can read music.

10) Bach "Cello Suites", Mstislav Rostropovich - I had the pleasure of seeing Rostropovich perform with the Chamber Orchestra under Ignat Solzhenitsyn earlier this year. It was a remarkable, once in a lifetime event, and I'm glad to have been there. In case you don't know, Rostropovich allowed Solzhenitsyn's father to stay in his home when Stalin wanted him on the streets. If you ever get a chance to see the documentary "Soldiers of Music: Rostropovich Returns to Russia", do so. This guy is a real hero, as well as one of the world's greatest cellists. "Soldiers of Music" is a quote from something Shostakovich told him, by the way.

The book of the year is "Testimony: The Memoirs of Dmitri Shostakovich", which was smuggled out of Russia and published after his death. A very interesting and candid report of what it was like to live under the hell that was Stalinist Russia. Could it be a prediction of post-Bush/Ashcroft USA? Nah, it would be unpatriotic to question where the Bill of Rights went.

Best wishes,

Steve Carl

## **Bill Kelly:**

Alright, alright... Top 10 CDs??? Im glad you guys have the TIME to LISTEN to 10 CDs. And Dave, I'm a little concerned that you can actually listen to those boxed sets... Anyway, I thought and thought about a way to respond. I always find these lists informative and a fun read, and forward them to a few people I know (and the Joni Mitchell fan club). Geeze, nobody loves music more than I, but Im WAY outta the loop. At my job I can listen to tunes all day, but my collection is a little limited, radio sucks, downloading MP3s that some asshole adolescent ripped using freeware really sucks, and WRTI and WXPB have virtually the same daily playlists that we slam commercial radio for.

So, heres my not-necessarily-music top 10 in no particular order:

1. Dylan Volume 4, Bootleg series, Rolling Thunder Review. Hot damn. Where was I in 1975 that I missed this tour? Its worth it for the liner notes. And why did they wait to release this gem? To think that he remembers lyrics without a teleprompter! Howd dey do dat bak den? Sounds like fun.

2. Hamburgers. No, cheeseburgers. Bacon cheeseburgers. Pour more charcoal in the grill than youll ever need (gas is for yuppies), get it roaring hot, and I mean roaring. Use supermarket beef thats at least 20% fat, about 8oz each, make em look different. Have a beer or two. Throw those babies on the grill dont worry about the flames ever hear the term flame-broiled? Turn em before the fire company arrives, crack open another beer, slap a wad of Land O Lakes white American on top, and when the cheese starts to drip on the coals, throw those babies between a good old white-bread hamburger bun. Maybe toast the buns if you want, but when I do it the grill is so hot it incinerates em. Eat immediately. If greasy goo doesnt run down your chin, you didnt do it right. Ahh, heaven. If youre not hungry now, I dont know what to say. Go to fucking SubWay. A nice touch is to lay a little foil on the grill, off to the side, and heat up some of that weird instant Oscar Mayer bacon that comes unrefrigerated in the box lay that on top of the cheese at the last minute.

3. Beer. Good old Budweiser. My old (dead) friend Marvin Gilmore was right. Fuck that imported shit, boutique beers, micro-beers.. Whats that all about besides

marketing? And when did Yuengling become hip? Its the same old shit that used to be three quarts for a dollar. Now, Bud out of the refrigerator just wont do, you have to have a cooler, and keep ice in it, mixed with a watery frozen sludge. Sink you hand in the cooler on a hot day after a little yard work, let your nerve endings say Howdy, pull out a cold one, zip that top and suck it down. Works well in the winter, too, but you may have to break the ice with a hammer. Kills E. coli, too (see above).

4. CSN&Y, Deja Vu. Dont laugh. Listen to it. Amazing, and according to my old friend Ed Palermo, Country Girl is perhaps the best song ever recorded. Beautiful. David Crosby at his absolute best, and before Stills turned into an asshole. Ive read that Crosby wrote Almost cut my hair on a plane when hearing that Bobby Kennedy was shot. And Neil Youngs Helpless.

5. Spring and summer. Need I explain? If you dont have allergies, you gotta love the smell of cut grass, warm breezes, open windows, thunderstorms... If you dont plant vegetables youre an idiot that DESERVES to ingest pesticides. If I ever wake up with a fist growing out of my back, it wont be because I bought my Jersey tomatoes in the supermarket. And people that have rocks in their yards have rocks in their heads. Slugs, however, Ill never understand, but I sure hate to kill them, like Im in some Stephen King story. Local asparagus, then strawberries, blueberries, peaches, sweet corn.....

6. Kids. When Max, almost a year old, looks at me and just smiles and laughs its just the best. Unconditional love, just like a dog. Unlike a dog, kids quickly grow out of this. Its personally rewarding to me, and frightening to you, that my DNA will continue on the lives of others. Nuff said.

7. Steve Earl, Sidetracks. I hear more laughter. I have this love/hate thing with Steve Earl. I only read about him peripherally until last year when I caught him on a lark on Austin City Limits. I was transfixed. And straight/sober, too. Hadnt had a good vibe like that for years. Checked out his albums Transcendental Blues and El Corazon, and its kind of hit or miss. Worth a listen, but forget his new one, Jerusalem, which is politics for idiots a little too obvious. Sidetracks is a collection of out-takes, and leftovers. Worth the price for his version of the Jamaican Johnny Too Bad, with a toaster rapping over it, etc.... And a whopping version of the Chambers Brothers Time Has Come Today, if you can stand guest vocals by Cheryl Crow. I cant. And a killer Lowell Georges Willin.

8. The beach. OK, I live in Ocean City, in a miniature house on a postage stamp lot, but you know what? Its heaven. Summer. Beach. Warm sand. Water,

waves, semi-naked women, the smell of burning skin. Shit, I even love the low-tide-around-a-jetty smell. Nothing beats it. Our kids are fishes and beach rats. Its genetic, they cant help it., Alexa wants surfing lessons, and she can throw a frisbee. Whats better than that? Our kids ride bikes, run around the neighborhood, and will probably be a dermatologists dream. So what? Sand, water and sun rule. A few hours of summertime on the beach followed by beer and hamburgers (see above). Jesus, Im a lucky man. And since the late 80s it been amazingly clean hardly a day went by last summer when we didnt see schools of dolphins fishing and playing right beyond the breakers. Surfers and kayakers routinely come close, and sometimes theyll be followed or played with... There must be God.

9. Striped Bass. After forty years of living here, I finally hooked up with a few people who give me striped bass when theyre running. Best luck Ive had. Fresh striper in the pan less than hours out of the water. I thoroughly understand how these nuts stand out in the freezing rain, or up to their waist surf-casting for this beautiful creation. Aint no substitute. Maybe the only reason to look forward to fall and winter. And the kids ALL go gaga over it. They aint getting mine!

10. Pretenders, Pretenders. A real stunner, their first LP, and in my view, their best all-around. Theres such a unique vibe on this, sometimes a little unsettling. A killer band at their best. I had the good fortune to see this band twice, and what a band they were. Quick run, though.

All the best.

## George Tucker:

(1/31/03)

Dudes,

Sorry for the delay in sending this out. My medical situation played a big part in keeping me from getting this together. At any rate, my picks are slim and probably contain no surprises.

Best Albums:

Elastic, Joshua Redman. This is a trio record with Redman, keyboardist Sam Yahel and the amazing Brian Blades on drums. It is reminiscent of a Weather Report record in that it has beautiful

textures, good writing, and soulful playing. My fave of the year.

Directions, Movable Feast. A local Mpls. quartet made up of ex-Prince members and other free lance jazzers this is their second release.

Great writing, fine playing and a wonderful sense of humor.

[www.moveable-feast.com](http://www.moveable-feast.com)

Here and There, Jesse van Ruller. Got this from guitarist Clay Moore.

van Ruller is a Dutch guitarist with an amazing touch and feel.

Although I rarely like "jazz guitar" records, this one is good enough to make my list.

American Dreams, Charlie Haden and Michael Brecker. I don't think Charlie Haden can make a bad record. This is good writing, thoughtful covers, and great musicianship. Brian Blades again on drums. I think, like Peter Erskine or Steve Gadd, if Blades is the drummer on a record, it's probably worth buying.

Charles Ives Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4, Chicago Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas. This was a birthday gift from my gumba Steve Hayden.

It's a recent, all digital recording and it's magnificent. While No 1 is great it's Symphony No 4 that really takes me out.

Near Misses:

Brainwashed, George Harrison. Your basic, well-crafted pop record. I was hoping for more but it just never got over the top for me.

How Sweet It Is, Joan Osborne. This looked like a good idea, take a young R&B singer and cover some old R&B classics. The problem is the arrangements are so lame that there is no fire to this record. Ted, my brother-in-law, made me a companion CD with the same tunes done by the original artists and the difference in feel and soul is like a shock to the system. I like Joan Osborne. Her producer/arranger, John Leventhal, is also responsible for last year's disappointing Shawn Colvin record. I suspect I won't be buying any records of his until I've heard them first.

Thanks for putting up with the wait.

T4