



## featured album

**Luke Doucet**  
*Blood's Too Rich*  
Six Shooter Records

**KATHLEEN BELL**  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

*Blood's Too Rich* feels like a series of character sketches laid down side by side for the listener's perusal. The drifter, the long haul driver, and the stranger on the barstool are all seen through the eyes of a travelling musician and are all clearly scratched out with the sympathy of a man who shares the same wanderlust.

Luke Doucet proves himself an expert at evoking personas—be it his own or that of other road

eccentrics—in succinct lines like “my blood’s too rich for subway cars / And I’m too poor for a cab,” or “he said he was a guitar man / He used to play with Bob Dylan.”

These compassionate vignettes are backed by Doucet’s classic Nashvillian guitar playing and the occasional wide and wandering electric guitar solo. Riding shotgun are the White Falcons, a band that adds lightly brushed snare beats, deep steady

bass, and salty background vocals by wife—and talented singer/songwriter in her own right—Melissa McClelland. Lots of other players (Jim Cuddy, for example) get on and off at different stops along the way, contributing trumpet, piano, and vocals for the ensemble feel that any good road story requires.

The biggest problem with *Blood's Too Rich* is that it shouldn't be released in January. It should have shown up in the middle of a long, dusty heat wave sometime in late July, since Doucet's cool guitar picking goes down like a tall glass of sweet lemonade—maybe with a little added kick. Unfortunately, it's still hot chocolate season. But you can always add *Blood's Too Rich* to your collection and wait until global warming kicks in.



## albumreview

**Mongrels**  
*Oshawa*  
Weirdbeard Records

**SARAH STEAD**  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

“Mongrel” is a general term used for an animal of mixed breed. Mongrels more than live up to this name with their debut album, *Oshawa*. Imagine a hot musical ménage-a-trois between funk, soul, and rock, spawning to create a sound similar to but not quite like any of its parent genres, and you almost have Mongrels.

The band itself is a jigsaw of

borrowed members from other popular Montreal rock acts, including Local Rabbits, Bliss, Soft Canyon, and Juno-nominated Tricky Woo, who lend lead guitarist Andrew Dickson. This six piece, female-fronted group boasts not one but two drummers, a sexy mix of '70s-inspired guitar riffs, and powerful vocals courtesy of frontwoman Amy Turok, also

know as Amy Dynamite. “Needs Got Needs” opens with a healthy dose of cowbell glides, perfectly into the high energy “Set Me Free,” and ends with “Contemplating the Wizard,” which has guitar solos nastier than the urinals at a truck stop. *Oshawa* is an album that demands to be played loud and sounds better with each decibel increase.

As enjoyable as this release is, it hovers just below the 40 minute mark—a terrible tease. Despite being short, all eight tracks are exceptionally solid; there's not a weak one in the bunch. Overall, this album is a sweet, psychedelic rock candy treat, with multicolored sprinkles that will please your ears without rotting your teeth.



## albumreview

**In Its Wake**  
*In Its Wake*  
Independent

**DAVID JOHNSTON**  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Well, this is certainly weird. Normally when an album's chucked onto my lap and 300 words are demanded, I end up hating the artists, their songs, their studio, and their instruments with a fiery passion. But what's this? Can it be that I'm actually enjoying the first track on *In Its Wake's* self-titled debut EP? No! The music is filling my cold black heart!

*In Its Wake* are a small up-and-coming Toronto pop/rock band, self-produced and self-recorded, with songs written

by lead singer Jamie Nudds and guitarist Ernie Meggison. The big shock, though, is that their music is actually quite good. The band works together quite well and manages to pull together seven very listenable do-it-yourself tracks. They have enough smarts to open with their best effort, “Need to Breathe,” and by the time you get to “Unbelievable,” I defy you to not be dancing down the sidewalk. It's infectious.

They're not perfect, however—far from it. Being a young band, they take a

variety of musical choices and toss them around, trying them on for size. They jump around so much that they seem almost afraid of running out of stylistic choices. Likewise, Nudds needs to pick a voice and sing with it: on “Beneath the Waves” and “Give My Regards,” he sounds like he's purposefully trying to sing with a faked speech impediment. This not only distracts from the music, but recalls horrible images in my brain of how Dustin Hoffman destroyed *Mr Magorium's Wonder Emporium*.

But if these are the biggest quibbles that can be raised, then *In Its Wake* has produced a very successful debut disc. I'm apprehensive as to whether they can stretch their talent over a full album, but they've gotten my attention enough to want to check them out. And that is their greatest achievement of all—even better than using a cowbell as an instrument and not coming off as pretentious or Texan.



## albumreview

**Kenna**  
*Make Sure They See My Face*  
Interscope Records

**MARIA KOTOVYCH**  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

A first glance at Kenna's album cover suggests that the music might be creepy, bloody, or Satanic; it's some sort of death metal, perhaps, judging by the dripping red ink on the cover. But when *Make Sure They See My Face* starts playing, the music that emerges is thankfully alternative rock.

However, this fact isn't immediately obvious when the album first track starts to spin; it starts off with a minute-long intro to the first song, “Daylight.” That isn't bad in itself, except that this intro consists of instrumentals pointlessly overshadowed by an odd,

static-like noise. When the intro is finally over, the rock music begins; unfortunately, the singer's poor articulation of the lyrics does nothing to improve the song. “Daylight” isn't exactly an appealing way to start this album.

Things don't get better after that. Several of the songs rely on very repetitive lyrics, beats, and melodies. Repeating the phrase “Out of Control” probably takes up more than three of the four minutes in the track of the same name. In “Phantom Always,” the lyrics are both repetitive and

poorly enunciated, and even the poor articulation of words starts to feel repetitive by this point. “Sun Red Sky Blue” almost does us a favour by drowning out the vocals with some very strong instrumentals; however, Kenna just ends up yelling over the background, straining his voice in the process.

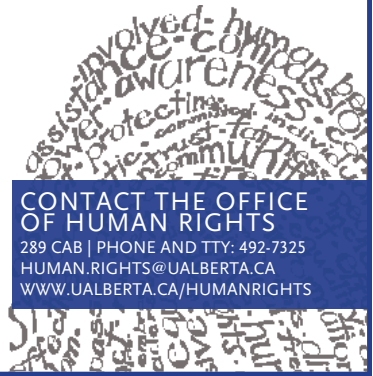
Just as one might take random things and throw them into the back of a truck, this CD takes random odd noises, background effects, and spoken words and tosses them into its songs. For instance, “Loose Wires/ Blink Radio” concludes with a bizarre spoken conversation that appears out of nowhere. In retrospect, it might be an effective way to conclude this song; after all, this piece does feature background singers who call out random words using a vocal timbre that's about as annoying as fingernails on a chalkboard.

Don't waste your time on this trainwreck of a CD.

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