



## featured album

**Jack Johnson**  
*Sleep Through the Static*  
Universal

CAROLINE GAULT  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

*Sleep Through the Static* is Jack Johnson's fifth album, and as such, it sounds like Jack Johnson—nothing we haven't heard before. But the soft strum of his acoustic guitar and the bass, drums, and keys are soothing nonetheless.

Of the album's 14 tracks, the upbeat "Hope," "If I Had Eyes in the Back of My Head," and "Monsoon" can't compare to Johnson's past

songs of similar rhythm, such as "Banana Pancakes" or "Sitting, Waiting, Wishing."

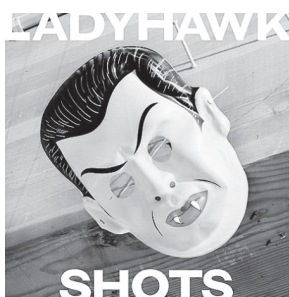
The chart-topping single "Sleep Through the Static" criticizes war and the waving of banners from America, the safe side of a war-zone. Johnson's plea for peace—"We went beyond where we should have gone"—is insightful and brings hope for the future in recognition and acceptance

of societal faults.

One of the better songs on the album is, unfortunately, also one of the shortest. "Angel," a two-minute ballad that opens with the beautiful, "I've got an angel / she doesn't wear any wings," is an interpretable praise to his wife, who makes angels herself (his kids).

*Sleep Through the Static's* relaxing rhythms are easy to sleep through. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; it's a perfect album to add to your iPod when you're in the mood for a hot bath and an evening of relaxation. Just don't listen to it when you're cramming for an exam, as it will do nothing but lull you *In Between Dreams*. Or was that his last album?

Listen to tracks from *Sleep Through the Static* on the Editor's playlist at [www.thegatewayonline.ca](http://www.thegatewayonline.ca)



## album review

**Ladyhawk**  
*Shots*  
Jagjaguwar

DAVID JANZEN  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

*Shots* is something like binge-drinking in a haunted house: simultaneously impulsive, rowdy, eerie, and forlorn, it's an abandoned revelry, a late-night howl, and an ode to darkness—which, considering the album was recorded in an abandoned farmhouse, often in late-night, liquor-fuelled sessions—shouldn't be surprising.

Ladyhawk carries on a West Coast tradition, conceived in dank Seattle basements amid shredded jeans and beer-soaked flannel shirts, of buzzing guitar rage and romping rhythms. This album is

thick with sporadic lead guitar melodies, palm-dampened power chords, and distant vocals that echo the strained voice of Neil Young, the granddaddy of grunge himself. But *Shots* achieves more than just fist-pumping riffs: like fellow Vancouver bands Black Mountain and Wolf Parade, Ladyhawk's at its best when using repetition to weave layered, dynamic revelry. The lead track, "I Don't Always Know What You're Saying," turns widening gyres out of a guitar and synth melody and wailing vocals. The haunting tension that develops lasts

throughout the album, a continuing threat that the music might completely unravel into white noise at any moment.

Singer Duffy Driediger's darkly themed poetics add to this effect, with lyrics that are well conceptualized though not consistently innovative. "I Don't Always Know What You're Saying" and the self-deprecating "(I'll Be Your) Ash Tray" are highlights, but the lyrical strength of the album is its thematic unity: *Shots* pays homage to the spirit of the night, and the lyrics indulge in this celebration, but they also contribute to the musical tension and seem natural in the strained echo of Driediger's voice.

The last track, "Ghost Blues," is a fitting finale. Six minutes into the epic, the band releases a hoarse hurrah and launches into four more minutes of wild, haunted abandonment, demonstrating once more an uncanny ability to play raucous, thoughtful, rapturous music.



## album review

**The Poplars**  
*A Pill For Everyone*  
Kindling Music/Warner

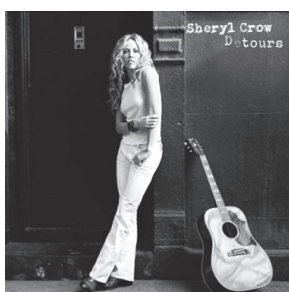
SARAH STEAD  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

After a three-year recording hiatus, The Poplars are releasing their second full-length album, *A Pill for Everyone*. Though the band's website boasts that "The Poplars sound like The Poplars: no one else sounds like The Poplars, and The Poplars sound like no other," they don't seem to have cultivated a new sound and actually have very little to offer in terms of musical originality.

The three-piece band consists of a bassist, drummer, and a guitarist who apparently knows only power chords. Their sound, far from uncharted territory, can be flagged as somewhere between alternative-pop and rock. "Teenage Party Girl," "Marilyn," and "Corina" are all songs about girls who are too cool, too talkative, or just plain uninterested in these dudes. The most interesting track

on the disc is probably "You Took My Ball Away," as the song has few lyrics, besides variations of "you took my ball away," which could perhaps be a metaphor for Freudian castration anxiety—or maybe the band members were just bullied at recess as children.

Most of the album's tracks are repetitive in terms of lyrical content—if this record was actually a pill, it would probably be a prescription sleep aid. Though the album isn't exactly bad, it just isn't different enough to be memorable. The pop-rock melodies are catchy while you're listening to them, but are easily forgotten afterwards. *A Pill for Everyone's* not what the doctor ordered, and The Poplars should be prescribed some songwriting classes in order to craft more original songs fine-tune the new sounds they're to be searching for.



## album review

**Sheryl Crow**  
*Detours*  
A&M Records

STEFFI ROSSKOPF  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

*Detours*, Sheryl Crow's seventh studio album, is a thoughtful—and controversial—production. It deals with the question of how to get back to who we are after life forces us to take detours from how we thought it was going to be. Crow doesn't deny that her recent fight against breast cancer is represented in the theme of the album, as well as the songs themselves.

Songs like "Make It Go Away" and "Now That You're Gone" directly

reflect upon Crow's experience with breast cancer and give the whole album a very personal touch. In contrast, songs like "Gasoline" are inspired by America's "war of oils ownership," and lines like "You got the bastards in Washington / Afraid of popping that greed vein / 'Cause the money's in the pipeline" give the album some edge. Thus, the personal scope of *Detours* extends to that of protesting against what Crow sees happening around us. A slight folksy

touch is added to Crow's well-known rock and pop style, which suits the protest nature of the album perfectly. The light-heartedness of previous songs like "All I Wanna Do," gets replaced with tough personal experience. However, despite the overall quality of the album, a few minor flaws are noticeable.

The transition from "God Bless this Mess" to "Shine Over Babylon" is so sudden that the listener almost gets yelled at, and comes completely out of the blue following the calmness of the first song. "Out of Our Heads" sounds more like a kids' choir singing, rather than a sophisticated Sheryl Crow. But the wonderful harmonics of "Love Is Free," "Love Is All There Is," and the title song not only make up for the previously mentioned mess-ups, but are the musical highlight of the entire album and make it well worth listening to.

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