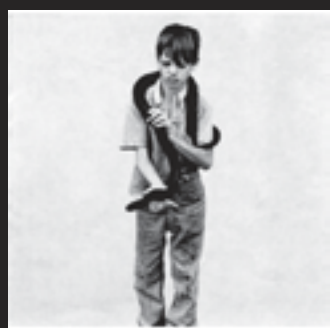


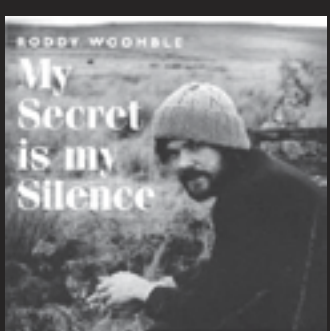
LEFT OF THE DIAL



Primal Scream
Riot City Blues
(Sony)

Bobbie Gillespie, prime figure of Scot rockers Primal Scream, repeatedly questions, "What can a poor boy do?" on "Country Girl," the stomping opening salvo of his band's seventh proper full-length. What's a poor boy to do, indeed? After all, Gillespie and longstanding cohort, guitarist Andrew Innes, have virtually done it all. Their chameleon's parade of shifting styles has led them through the paisley-hued garage of their earliest records, the rock hijacking of ecstasy culture with 1991's legendary *Screamadelica*, a twisted turn for a Main Street exile with *Give Up But Don't Give Up*, dub experiments and soundtrack exotica on *Vanishing Point* and biting, nihilistic white noise on *XTRMNTR* and *Evil Heat*. Primal Scream have consistently pushed their own boundaries to make great records while never making the same record twice. Maybe the band has learned enough from taking so many chances and decided that a "kick down the walls" sort of rock-and-roll record might not be such a bad thing in 2006. So while *Riot City Blues* manages to continue the uncharted path that has been Primal Scream's career, it bears the ballsy, straight-ahead rock hallmarks typified on *Give Out*. Where *Riot City* arguably surpasses it is in sheer songcraft. Gillespie has learned how to put together a great track, which a song like "Country Girl" is on all counts: bursting as a jubilant, energetic shot of testifying soul-rock with plenty of hook. "Nitty Gritty" trades heavy in the Stonesian swagger and dolloped on top with sass and pop appeal, while the stripped harmonica blues of "We're Gonna Boogie" is pure, direct and raw. "Suicide Sally and Johnny Guitar" is key Primals territory with an explosive snatch of drugs and lust and hate and rock and roll that boils over to a Fred Smith-style guitar solo where Innes apes Sonic's *Rendezvous*' blistering single "City Slang." More homage is apparent in the easy-going, good time declaratory raunch of "Dolls (Sweet Rock and Roll)," tapping the vein of the Velvets and, as the title likely name-checks, the New York Dolls. So what if Primal Scream ain't rewriting the book with *Riot City Blues*. Remember they've already rewritten it...a few times. They're a great rock-and-roll band who remembered what's important: Make a great rock-and-roll record.

—donny kutzbach



Roddy Woomble
My Secret Is Silence
(Pure UK)

This is a quintessential "kid in a candy store" situation. On his first effort away from his band Idlewild, Woomble spends 45 minutes indulging his passions, poetics and Scottish tradition, while drawing on a wide variety of guest musicians and instrumentation to create a record of folk hooks and heavenly harmonies. The album has acoustic "Idlewild moments," thanks in large part to the inclusion of guitarist Rod Jones appearing on the majority of the album. "Waverly Steps" and "As Still as I Watch Your Grave" could have been from the sessions for the band's *The Remote Part*, as Jones and Woomble take the traditional Idlewild formula and turn it down from 11 to somewhere near seven, adding a fiddle or two and calling it a day. Still, the album is much more than an acoustic installment of Idlewild, with Woomble assembling a variety of traditional musicians, including a fellow Scot in the multi-talented John McCusker as well as English vocalist Kate Rusby. Rusby's vocals set the proverbial table for Woomble's celebrated choruses across *My Secret*, nowhere more so than on the album's title track. Woomble isn't afraid to mix it up, with songs like "The Drifter and the Drake" and "Under My Breath" recalling acts as diverse as Minus the Bear and R.E.M., respectively. In fact, I'd be remiss—as well as reprimanded—if I didn't acknowledge the little bird in my ear continually comparing *My Secret Is My Silence* to Michael Stipe writing a country album. The record isn't just a must for Idlewild fans, but also of interest to the folk crowd, mixing in hints that run from Travis to Spirit of the West.

—nick mendola



Tokyo Police Club
A Lesson in Crime
(Paper Bag Records)

This Toronto four-piece has been touched by the hand of the indie rock god-head. Just last week Tokyo Police Club's *A Lesson in Crime* EP earned a sturdy 7.9 out of 10 rating at notoriously tough-grading online tastemaker *Pitchfork*. That kind of review can catapult an unknown band up from the underground almost instantly to an adoring global audience. If you don't believe me just ask Clap Your Hands and Say Yeah or Tapes and Tapes. So Tokyo Police Club can thank the Internet if they go big. They just might, too. The band pulls off this strong collection of fresh, bristly rock that boasts smarts, nerve and spiky, concise songs that generally stay well, well below the three-minute mark. Tokyo Police Club glue their compositions of punky spirit and sparked pop with witty composure and the kind of abstractions that add to (instead of take away from) the overall feel. They're fun but they're also smart. Handclaps are everywhere supplementing drummer Greg Alsop's amiable backbeat. Singer/bassist Dave Monk sings of waltzing out of the room in his detached tenor on "Be Good" while Graham Wright's keyboard drone leads "Citizens of Tomorrow" before Josh Hook's searing guitar tears in halfway through. TPC pull together for a thoroughly unique sound while still catching the ear of anyone who has ever tapped a foot to the Strokes, thought too much about Isaac Brock's yowled verses or asked, "Who the fuck are Arctic Monkeys?"

—donny kutzbach

Tokyo Police Club performs this Tuesday, August 22 at Mohawk Place with The Anti-Q's and Czech Mates.

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