

Freak Scene Favorites of 2011 – compiled by Randy B.

"Look at this beautiful kitten." "Fuck you, that kitten's a socialist. You're a fag." Basically that's the crux of all Internet discussion.- Jeff Tweedy of Wilco to Magnet magazine.

Top 10

1) Pete & The Pirates – Come To The Bar – One Thousand Pictures: *Something like a cross between the Kinks and Television Personalities, the Reading outfit write slightly psychedelic, pithily whimsical songs. Their forte remains well-observed, understated guitar pop, including the sort of personal portraits we used to get from Ray Davies. (This album is) crying out to be heard in the nation's homes. – The Guardian.*

2) The Go! Team – Buy Nothing Day – Rolling Blackouts: *Rolling Blackouts is a natural disaster in musical form—a messy, lo-fi garbage bag full of genres and cultures, overflowing with left-field sonic trickery: corny turntable scratching, shit garage drums, twinkling glockenspiels, and enough spunky cheerleader bravado to start a whole squad. "Buy Nothing Day" is a glorious, New Pornographers-esque slice of power-pop with surprising chord changes and a Neko Case-ish chorus. - Paste*

3) Dum Dum Girls – He Gets Me High – He Gets Me High EP: *Dee Dee recalls the brassy authority of Chrissie Hynde and the sharp emotionalism of Kate Bush. She's a commanding presence on these songs, showing more poise and nuance than she has in the past. Rare is the EP that sounds so crucial to an artist's catalog and narrative, but it won't be surprising to look back on this release in a few years and see it as pivotal. - Pitchfork*

4) Wild Flag – Boom – Wild Flag: *Wild Flag variously invoke first-wave punk, post-hardcore indie rock, 1960s girl-group pop, Nuggets-vintage garage, Stony FM-radio raunch, and even flashes of proggy psychedelia. But Wild Flag aren't so much trying to relive a particular era or movement as re-stoke the kind of passion, commitment, and fandom that allowed those movements to coalesce and flourish in the first place. – Pitchfork*

5) Crocodiles – Sleep Forever – Sleep Forever: *There is a constant tug-of-war between discord and melody found throughout Crocodiles stellar sophomore record and that tension and struggle goes a long way towards making this album so magnetic. The feedback and reverb are ever-present, but layered within that cacophony of sound are some irresistible melodies and downright infectious riffs. – The Line of Best Fit*

6) Veronica Falls – Found Love In A Graveyard – Veronica Falls: *London-based Veronica Falls don't dilly-dally. The music is lean, and the lyrics curt. On the opening verse of "Found Love in a Graveyard," the hazy-voiced sweetness of Clifford sounds as if it's locked in a dead-eyed stare. Patrick Doyle doesn't harmonize as much as hover, and every brush of the guitar is spotless-clean, even as the minimal ol'-fashioned pop jangle builds to a trot. – LA Times*

7) The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart – Heart In Your Heartbreak – Belong: *Belong is a giddy swoon of swirling guitars and big, bold choruses. Glistening, sleek, it has big ambitions that it announces in cooing little confessions. It's overflowing with drifting dream pop elegies, and it has the confidence to not only dream of outer space, but to build a rocket out of cardboard and tin-foil and to have a good go at reaching them itself. - PopMatters*

8) Peter Bjorn and John– I Know You Don't Love Me – Gimme Some: *Less of a power trio than a triple-threat of modern pop songcraft, these guys know how tunes work, and they know how to craft one from the inside out. But something's different on Gimme Some. The energy level is up; the production is clanky and raw; the guitars ring louder, and the drums hit harder. For the first time, Peter Bjorn and John actually sound like—dare we say—a rock band. - Paste*

9) Death Cab For Cutie - Doors Unlocked And Open – Codes And Keys: *Wow. I searched the Internet for an hour and the best review I could find was half-heartedly mediocre. Flying in the face of convention, I thoroughly enjoyed this more than any DCF record since The Photo Album. This cut has a dark undertone and hypnotic quality that sucked me in. (And yes, I preferred Liam's band over Noel's too) – Randy B.*

10) This Is Why We Fight – The Decemberists – The King Is Dead: *Singer-songwriter Colin Meloy packs his storytelling eccentricities into popsong packages of verse, hook and country-Smiths jangle, arranged with the introspective simplicity of Neil Young's Harvest. – Rolling Stone*

Best of the Rest

The German Art Students – The Power And The Trust – The Power And The Trust EP
Icarus Himself – MCO – Career Culture
Tom Waits – Bad As Me – Bad As Me
David Bazan – Wolves At The Door – Strange Negotiations
Washed Out – Eyes Be Closed – Within And Without
PJ Harvey – In The Dark Places – Let England Shake
TV On The Radio – Caffeinated Consciousness – Nine Types of Light
The Joy Formidable – The Magnifying Glass – The Big Roar
The Raveonettes – Ignite – Raven In The Grave
Ringo Deathstarr – Do It Every Time – Colour Trip
Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks – Tune Grief – Mirror Traffic
Sleeping In The Aviary – So Lonely – You And Me, Ghost
Wilco – Standing O – The Whole Love
The Feelies – When You Know – Here Before
Wavves – I Wanna Meet Dave Grohl – Life Sux
Art Brut – Axl Rose – Brilliant! Tragic!
The Vaccines – If You Wanna – What Did You Expect From The Vaccines?
Yuck – Holing Out – Yuck
Beady Eye – Four Letter Word – Different Gear, Still Speeding
They Might Be Giants – When Will You Die – Join Us
Title Tracks – All Tricks – In Blank
Fountains of Wayne – The Summer Place – Sky Full of Holes
The Baseball Project – C'mon Prince (Stay In Milwaukee) – Single
R.E.M. – Alligator Aviator Autopilot Antimatter – Collapse Into Now
Dum Dum Girls – Always Looking – Only In Dreams

Missed the list but worth a listen:
Arctic Monkeys – Suck It And See
Cake – Showroom of Compassion
The Drums – Portamento
Mates of State – Mountaintops
The Midwest Beat – Gone Not Lost
My Morning Jacket – Circuitual
Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds – S/T
Okkervil River – I Am Very Far
Robert Pollard – Lord of the Birdcage
The Rural Alberta Advantage – Departing
Sloan – The Double Cross
Smith Westerns – Dye It Blonde
Surfer Blood – Tarot Classics EP
We Were Promised Jetpacks – In The Pit of the Stomach

Listen to these tracks here: <http://8tracks.com/freakscene/freak-scene-favorites-of-2011-top-10>