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ARTS DEVO

by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



JUST PLAY ME ANOTHER SONG Should there be any awards shows for this year? With so many canceled/postponed tours, albums, films, etc., the entertainment machine should just skip 2020 like the 13th floor and move up to the next year. **Arts DEVO** is. I just don't have the heart to sift through the COVID wreckage and do my usual DEVO Awards. Since March, it's been mostly music that's been able to make a mark under the circumstances, and as I've been writing repeatedly, it's music that's held me together during coronatimes.

So, for this final print column of the year, I've decided to share a bunch of the lockdown music released by locals that's hit my computer monitors—and give out two awards along the way:

Artist of the Year: It is no secret to regular readers of this column that I've been a huge fan of **Scout** over the past five years. In 2020, the multi-instrumentalist/beat-maker/singer-songwriter recorded and released two full albums. The most recent, *Don't Forget the End*, is a nimble, playful, self-recorded collection of soulful electro indie-pop that came out in September (my jams are "Bosie" and the sweet pop anthem to loving one's self, "Like I Love Me").

Transitioning came before—in April—and in the online description, Scout explains its significance: "This album was recorded throughout the beginning of my Transgender Hormone Replacement Therapy. Here you can hear my voice shifting all the way from my first shot of testosterone (track 1) to the end of my first year (track 10). I hope you find a bop!"



It's as engaging as always, with the transitioning voice playing across tightly constructed indie-rock/hip-hop/chillwave-informed songs. My personal "bop" is "Not My Job," with its sneaky infectious groove; insistent bassy synth riffs; multiple guitar flourishes coming and going; and lyrics addressing the often futile act of trying to open a closed mind, with repeated refrains of "What's the point of talking to you" and "I'm not wasting my words anymore." scoutthewise.bandcamp.com

Album of the year: **Fera** – *Aurelia*: The varied and often surprising sonic experiments—the exhilarating climax of distorted guitar on the otherwise acoustic "Come Down"; the found sounds on the title track; the muted spoken word on "The Black Water" ("You are never

alone and are never out of reach"); the jarring bursts of noise on the delicate/pretty "The First Leaf"—sound like a singer/songwriter/engineer coming fully into his own. fera.bandcamp.com/album/aurelia

MORE LOCAL CORONATIMES MUSIC:

Surrogate – "COVID: A Love Song": With amazing counter-melodies between singer/songwriter Chris Keane and guest vocalist Lorna Such, a bossa nova beat and an ear-worm keyboard riff, this is one impossible-to-resist pop song. [youtube.com/watch?v=pmUUqxVuQWM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmUUqxVuQWM)

Astronaut Ice Cream – *Blue*: Electro-disco-pop Prozac for quarantine. astronauticecream.band.com/music

Seven Mills – *Evergreen*: Lush vocals over piano and sound-effects on this beautiful debut by a high school senior recording at home during COVID times. Streaming at Spotify, etc.

Hooker Oaks – *EP*: Ken Lovgren's bedroom recording with sweet-and-sad lyrics, inventive melodies and ridiculously great reverb-soaked guitar tone. hookeroaks.bandcamp.com/releases

The Bidwells – *Anywhere You Take Me*: Harmony-driven duo's impressive wide-ranging debut—from the Cole Porter-esque "Able" to the rollicking "Harriet." thesingingbidwells.com

The Tightys – *four Bandcamp singles*: Dad rock by dads who don't listen to any of that wimpy dad rock. Hot cut: "Hank," with a glorious and gritty guitar riff that smells of weed and cheap beer. thetightys1.bandcamp.com

RotoLords – *RotoLords*: Fuzzed-out weirdo garage recordings from music-dudes-around-town Nate Daly and Greg Hopkins, and guests. (Warning: contains rototoms!) rotolords.bandcamp.com

The Golden Travelers: *Saviors of New York* – *Death of a Whale*: A gorgeous blend of pop-rock and folk-rock and harmonizing vocals of Jeff Reid and Mark Pullyblank. Streaming at Spotify, etc.

Cat Depot – *Peak Millennial Nostalgia*: Guitar savant Mathew Houghton is joined by The Americas drummer Casey Deitz on a set of gorgeous and complex instrumental soundscapes. kitkatsrecords.bandcamp.com

E.E. – *Future Fantasy*: Epic 20-minute bit-crushing noise jam. kitkatsrecords.bandcamp.com
Abberance – "Fish Hooking a Penis" and "Eradicate Irradiate": Two brutal, unrelenting, two-and-a-half-minute singles of metal that is death. aberranceband.bandcamp.com

Furlough Fridays – *TGIFF*: The high-energy power-pop crew is back with heavy set of five tunes—each named for a classic TV show—that drops Friday (Dec. 11). My fist-in-the-air jam is "X-Files." ffyeah.com