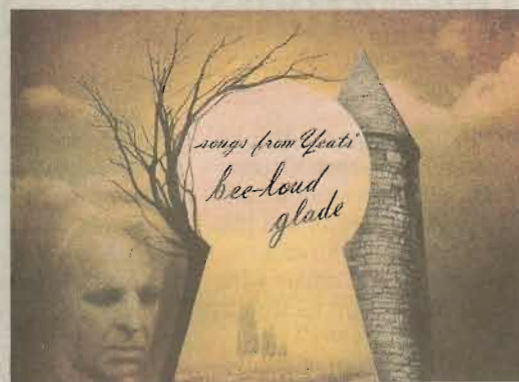


THAT WAS 2011 THE YEAR IN REVIEW

SOUNDOUTINGS



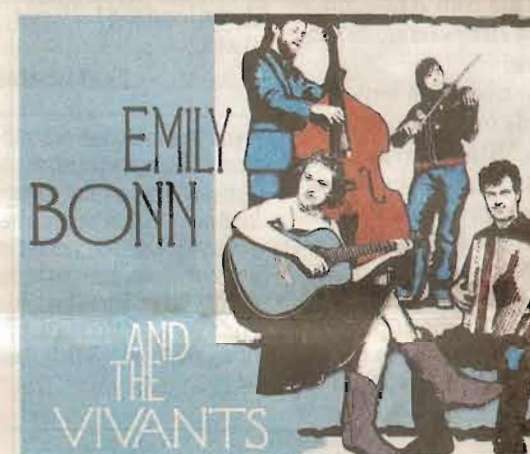
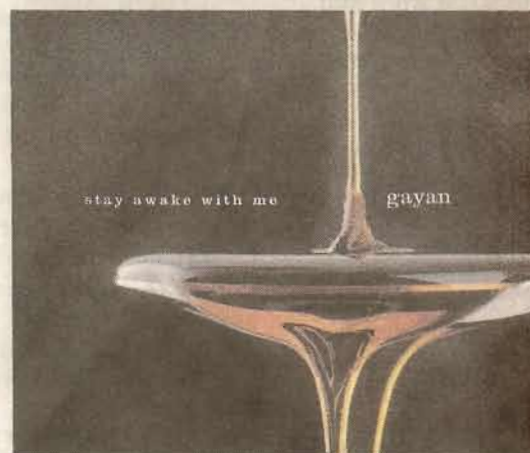
I can't just plunge into the new year without a look back at the 10

best local albums of 2011 from our weekly Press Play column. I reviewed outstanding albums by some fine young singer-songwriters, from established artists, a surprising collection of songs with lyrics by a dead Irish poet, lively new-age CDs and a bunch of others that made me sit up and take notice. Here are the 10 best albums.

Big Tree: Their self-titled album was the first full-length CD from an erstwhile East Coast indie pop band fronted by Marin-bred singer-songwriter Kaila McIntyre-Bader, a 23-year-old San Rafael High grad with major talent as a singer-songwriter.

She met the other members of Big Tree in a jazz class at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, which explains the intelligent lyrics and jazzy quality of the 11 original songs she wrote for this

promising debut. Since this CD came out,



INSIDE

>Press Play kicks off the new year with a review of tastefully twangy album by Treble Makers/B2

PLAYING

ter space nasties hit a group of American themselves fighting

WITH THE DRAGON Director David Fincher ("The Social Network") tackles the end of the first book in the first book or Stieg Larsson's Millennium Trilogy. A highly-regarded Rooney Mara take on of reporter Mikael Blomkvist hacker Lisbeth

With the sumptuous, director Martin Scorsese departs from the head for a family-friendly fable we've seen. But since an artist who gave us "Raging Bull" and "Hugo" isn't run-of-mill. Its themes are nihilism, its pacing meaningful, and the light to sharp life in a past to behold and

IMPOSSIBLE - BOLT (PG-13): Pixar and ("The Incredibles") venture into live action with the "Mission: Impossible" franchise. Tom Cruise leads Ethan Hunt as he's often accused of a mission on the Kremlin. Jermain Pegg and Paula

ETS (PG): "The Clearing and charming and natured spirit of but with enough sly, to keep it from being a

WITH MARILYN Book promises to Marilyn Monroe. But remains an enigma. Change with the frothy Marilyn, in which she basks radiantly as a star. Still, the lightweight Simon Curtis offers a contentment itself — and, as well — with captured, gossipy

'S EVE (PG-13):

SCREENINGS

TV Studios, 819 A St., 4-3227; www.mit- email.mitf@igc.org. n.: The Task Force on screens this document- 1961 protest against in Montgomery, benefit to send Marin co Diaz to the Mexico ark's study abroad \$10.

FRANK — Yoga- parkspur Landing Circle, visionaryedge.org. n.: The documentary how improved his health encouragement from e Gratitude in San lowed by a live Skype h Frank Ferrante, the \$12 to \$16.

ES — Century Smith Ranch Road, 2-5050; CineArts

"New Year's Eve" is the second in a remarkably shallow series of holiday-themed, celebrity-stuffed confections from director Garry Marshall and screenwriter Katherine Fugate, following their 2010 "Valentine's Day" collaboration. Many of the elements are the same as they were for "Valentine's Day," just moved back on the calendar a few weeks, with the script again weaving together a dozen or so plotlines that crisscross a holiday prone to getting sentimentalized.

"SHAME" (NC-17): Despite the ado about its NC-17 rating, this is the least-sexy movie about sex you will ever see. Michael Fassbender lays himself bare, literally and metaphorically, as a sex addict prowling an increasingly dark and dangerous New York City. But there's nothing titillating about the often graphic interludes in which his character, Brandon, engages; they grow more desperate, animalistic and unsatisfying — for everyone involved — as the film spirals toward its overwhelming conclusion.

"SHERLOCK HOLMES: A GAME OF SHADOWS" (PG-13): Very little was subtle about "Sherlock Holmes," director Guy Ritchie's 2009 steam-punk take on the iconic character. The good news is that the inevitable sequel — "Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows" — is even more entertaining. The overblown fight scenes and big bangs are still around; the plot doesn't make any more sense than the original's; and the playful, homoerotic subtext is downright pervasive. But the game is now afoot with Holmes' arch-nemesis, Professor James Moriarty — and that makes a notable difference.

"WAR HORSE" (PG-13): Steven Spielberg directs this World War I epic that tells the story of a friendship between a horse and a young Englishman. When the horse is forced into service with the British military, it begins a journey through the horrors of war as the horse tries to return to its home.

"WE BOUGHT A ZOO" (PG): Cameron Crowe directs this true story about a single father who decides his family needs a fresh start — and ends up buying a dilapidated zoo. Matt Damon, Scarlett Johansson, Thomas Haden Church and Elle Fanning star.

Marin, 101 Caledonia St., Sausalito; 331-0285 and CineArts Sequoia, 25 Throckmorton Ave., Mill Valley; 388-4862; www.fathomevents.com. Jan. 11, 6:30 p.m.: High-definition digital presentation of the Metropolitan Opera production of Gounod's opera "Faust." \$15 to \$22.

MET ENCORES — Lark Theater, 549 Magnolia Ave., Larkspur; 924-5111; www.larktheater.net. Jan. 11, 6 p.m.: High-definition digital presentation of the Metropolitan Opera production of Handel's opera "Rodelinda." \$24.

"NOURISH: FOOD AND COMMUNITY" — Gathering Thyme, 226 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., San Anselmo; Jan. 8, 4:45 p.m.: Marin filmmaker Kirk Bergstrom presents and discusses his documentary about our relationship to food on both global and personal levels. Donations.

LIBERATORE: Top local CDs

From page 2

jazz chanteuse, deserves all the accolades coming her way. She's earned them.

Buy It: "Lovers After All, Deborah Winters, Jazzed Media, www.jazzedmedia.com, \$14.99.

Elvin Bishop: Bishop's enduring appeal is that of the good-time bluesman, and you can hear the good times rolling on "Raisin' Hell Revue," a rollicking live CD recorded last year on one of the Legendary Rhythm and Blues Cruises.

A longtime resident of San Geronimo Valley, Bishop shares lead vocals with John Nemeth, a bright young star on the blues scene; veteran Finis Tasby, formerly of Freddie King's band; and his battle-tested bandmate, saxophonist Terry Hanck.

An intelligent musician, Bishop isn't all fun and games, and he gets serious with his torn-from-the-headlines tune "What the Hell Is Goin' On?"

Buy It: "Raisin' Hell Revue," Elvin Bishop, Delta Groove Music, CD Universe, \$13.58.

Maria Muldaur: Our own Mill Valley diva returned to her beloved New Orleans to record "Steady Love," a mix of the sacred and the profane, seamlessly blending soul-stirring spiritual/gospel songs into her signature gumbo of electric blues and swamp funk. For these sessions, Muldaur enlists some of Crescent City's finest players.

She says she loves New Orleans because it has the same sultry climate as her ancestral village in Italy. On this album, she's never sounded more at home.

Buy It: "Steady Love," Maria Muldaur, independent, Amazon.com, \$15.49.

Kyle Alden: It's one thing to have the intel-

lectual idea to write songs inspired by the poems of William Butler Yeats. It's quite another to have the musical talent and songwriting ability to pull it off.

San Anselmo singer-songwriter Alden succeeds on all those levels with "Songs from Yeats' Bee-Loud Glade," setting to music a collection of 13 poems by the revered Irish poet and playwright. Yeats, who died in 1939, never sounded more alive.

Buy It: "Songs from Yeats' Bee-Loud Glade," Kyle Alden, independent, www.kylealden.com; \$15.

Emily Bonn & The Vivants: Bonn grew up in Mill Valley, but she sounds like she comes from Memphis, Tenn., or Macon, Ga., on her rootsy debut CD, "Songs from Alabama Street." The young multi-instrumentalist plays guitar and banjo and sings in a laconic drawl that's as homespun as a gingham bonnet. She's been mentioned in the same breath as Gillian Welch, Neko Case and the Be Good Tanyas. On the strength of the seven engaging original songs on this auspicious first album of acoustic Americana, she deserves to be in that category.

Buy It: "Songs from Alabama Street," Emily Bonn and the Vivants, independent, CD Baby, \$10 CD, \$7 MP3.

Blame Sally: This all-woman Bay Area quartet takes the title of its sparkling new album, "Speeding Ticket and a Valentine," from a line in the lead-off single, "Living Without You," a buoyant pop rocker written by Mill Valley's Renee Harcourt.

This CD came along at an apex in the Bay Area band's 11-year career. It's the first release in a five-year, three-album, mid-six-figure deal with Berke-

ley-based indie Ninth Street Opus, so look for more music from Harcourt and company in 2012. Meanwhile, this album showcases the multiple styles and personalities of a band that has become a success by staying true to itself.

Buy It: "Speeding Ticket and a Valentine," Blame Sally, Ninth Street Opus, CD Universe, \$9.58.

Gayan Macher: On his San Francisco Zen Center bio, longtime Marin County Sufi teacher Macher never even mentions that he's a singer-songwriter with this soul-stirring CD, "Stay Awake With Me," to his credit. That may have to do with spiritual modesty, the suppression of ego, but this album of seven of Macher's original songs is something to be proud of, Press Play's sleeper hit of the year.

Macher, who lives in Fairfax, writes poems in the tradition of mystical poets like Rumi and Rilke, managing to invoke what he calls "the inner lover" without being preachy or saccharine or clichéd, and that's rare for music in the spiritual genre.

Buy It: "Stay Awake With Me," Gayan Macher, independent, CD Baby, \$12 CD, \$9.99 MP3.

Contact Paul Liberatore via email at liberatore@marinij.com; follow him on Twitter at http://twitter.com/LibLarge.

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6 BEST PICTURE

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PG-13

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