

Top 11 of '11, part 1

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Continued from - (see entry #275)—it's my top 11 of 2011.

5. Liz Phair: Exile on Guyville This album has a special place in my heart because it came out when I was living with lousy roommates on the South side of Chicago, so when I'd stroll down the ave with my headphones on and *Help me, Mary* ("please/ I've lost my home to thieves./ They bully the stereo and drink./ They leave suspicious things in the sink.") played on the radio, I could *relate*. Now you know how old I am, because I'm referring to something good playing on the radio. But Ms Phair in no way sounds dated. Here's my favorite track not on *Guyville*¹, mostly for that line about spotlights.

4. Victoire: Cathedral City The people on turntable.fm²'s 'All kinds of Classical' room debate how to class this one, but the band rightly claims honors from the sort of people who rate classical music.

It is an album for driving at night. If you find yourself in transit after sunset, then this album will help you. A link³

3. Emahoy Tsege Mariam Gebru : Ehtiopiques 21 What am I supposed to compare this to? It sound nothing like other Ethio-jazz; it's much more interesting than Satie; it is from somewhere outside⁴.

It seems that the right way to purchase her music is via a \$20-ish contribution to her music education foundation⁵.

2. UNKLE: End titles...Stories for film I had *Psyence fiction* on repeat maybe a decade ago, and here they are again. The band isn't really a band; more like a few producers who put together a set of tracks with a consistent spy movie tone and fuzz to the bass. The vocals are from a variety of different characters; the stuff from Gavin Clark sounded great. E.g., *Heaven* ("Where's the seraphim? Where's the money that I made?"), which is the audio for this video that is not at all what I picture when I hear this song⁶ (maybe start around 2:45).

¹<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QQdcLJgJz-E>

²<http://turntable.fm>

³<http://www.myspace.com/victoirmusic>

⁴<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4jmF8lro8s>

⁵<http://www.emahoymusicfoundation.org/solopianocompositions.html>

⁶<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yO2SJmMUr6A>

And then there was Katrina Ford. [Whose track is actually on *When did the night fall* but I feel compelled to mention her, and I can't really differentiate between the two albums.] Ms Ford attacks her songs. There is whooping and wailing throughout. There is passion. A lot of people don't like her, because they like their singers to follow more rules. Celebration's Hello Paradise⁷ didn't make this list only because I think my tracks were mis-tagged.

1. Wye Oak: The Knot. They put out another album this year, which had some good tracks, but this is the one from which last.fm says I played 204 tracks this year (a gross undercount). I don't know what you're into, but *Siamese*⁸ is about as close to the perfect track for me as it gets, as Ms Wasner, with her girlfriendly love-song voice, walks home late at night in Baltimore ("I keep my keys...between my fingers./ Don't hold back/ hit 'em right between the/ [pause like a gentle kiss]/ eyes."). There are another three or four 5-star tracks on the album as well: Take it in, which distills emo to its essence ("We are both the same:/ unwell."); Mary is Mary, (I am told they really did find a body in her back yard); I want for nothing ("Say no to me/ and I will love you more"). I seem to be talking a lot about the lyrics, but if you speak no English, this is still the pinnacle of music from two guys in a basement studio with sundry electric guitars and other instruments.

⁷<http://friendsrecords.bandcamp.com/album/hello-paradise>

⁸<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjRwBHNK4LE>