



## SOUNDCHECK

**Records  
in Review**

### Meshuggah

*Catch Thirty-Three (Nuclear Blast)*

★★★★

Once again living up to their name—which is derived from the Yiddish word for “crazy”—

Sweden's finest techno-thrashers have leapt off the the experimental ledge and recorded a truly disturbing and grating, if slightly annoying, soundscape. In other words, this is one of the most brilliant metal discs in recent years. Fredrik Thordendal and Mårten Hagström have nary a fusiony solo between them; instead, they've gotten at the heart of prog-rock's sheer, beautiful madness—through sick cyclic riffs with confounding time signatures and neck-jerking polyrhythms. Plus, the incessant low-end pounding from the seven- and eight-string axes will surely keep proctologists in business.



### MOMENT OF TRUTH: “The Paradoxical Spiral” (0:32–3:11)

Unless math is your thing, trying to decipher the numerous phrasal and metrical variations in this trance-inducing main riff will be utterly maddening.

### The Grascals

*The Grascals (Rounder)*

★★★★

Get a bunch of seasoned bluegrass sidemen together and you can bet that the resulting performance will be tighter than O.J.'s glove. Indeed, the Grascals work like a well-oiled machine, with none in the sextet straying even a microsecond from the downbeat of Terry Eldredge's rhythm guitar. Plus, the rich vocal harmonies are sung to perfection. Unfortunately, this Nashvillean sheen is often tied to country music's sentimentality, which here cools the urgency



that usually propels bluegrass. Making up for this, to some extent, are quality solos from mandolinist Danny Roberts and banjoist David Talbot on “My Saro Lane” and the semi-Celtic “Bevans Lake Crossing.”

**MOMENT OF TRUTH: “Mourning Dove” (1:08–1:30)** It's the picking speed that makes bluegrass such a hoot. Roberts and Talbot adhere to this maxim by stuffing each bar full of notes during their up tempo tradeoff.

### Oz Noy

*No! (Magnitude)*

★★★★

Over and above his technical skills on the electric guitar, New York's Noy has a warped sense of musical humor that keeps ears glued to the stereo. The range of weird guitar sounds he throws into his modern-jazz vocabulary makes this disc a cut above the



average, straight-faced fusion session. Want an impression of Scofield playing boogie-rock? Check out the clear-toned jazz scales and playful wah-wah licks that offset the chunky, distorted riffs of “Downside Up.” Stranger still, “Haal” could easily have been titled “Thelonius Monk Meets Godzilla,” owing to its skewed melody and fat tones.

**MOMENT OF TRUTH: “Say What?!” (1:38–3:18)** Noy starts rockin' the wah pedal, articulating his lines to evoke a robot's voice, and then adds some fleet yet convoluted ascending runs.

### Paul Motian

*I Have the Room Above Her (ECM)*

★★★★

In this all-star trio, esteemed jazz drummer Paul Motian ditches the bass and lets the tenor sax of Joe Lovano and the guitar of Bill Frisell carry the melodies. Even with the bass absent, Motian keeps his drumming in the background; his compositions are dreamy, ambient, and wide-open, leaving plenty of room for Frisell to work his typically subtle magic. The guitarist layers texture upon texture, and Lovano explores the harmonic outskirts of each. Their interplay peaks during the climbing harmonized lines of “Dance,” which eventually devolve into free-jazz musings, and again during “Osmosis Part 1,” particularly where Frisell experiments with haunting overtones and backward loops.

**MOMENT OF TRUTH: “Odd Man Out” (1:16–4:03)** Frisell functions as an all-in-one lead and rhythm player when he extracts lush melodies from his chord voicings.

—BOB KEELAGHAN

## REISSUES

### Les Paul

*Best of the Capital Masters: 30th Birthday Edition (EMI)*

★★★★

A collection of vintage recordings from one of the 20th century's most important musicians. This is essential listening for those interested in solid jazz

technique and innovative electric playing.

### At the Drive-In

*This Station Is Non-Operational (Fearless)*

★★★★

This post-breakup rarities collection from modern punk's answer to Rush features tight dynamics, strong melodies, and intricate rhythm-guitar

arrangements. Makes you wish the band hadn't imploded back in 2001.

### James Burton and Ralph Mooney

*Care Pickin' and Slick Slidin' (Sundazed)*

★★★★

The first domestic release to result from the pairing, in 1968, of Burton's Tele with Mooney's pedal steel. The easygoing instrumentals are better for their sound textures than for any anticipated hot-country and rockabilly licks.

### Vio-lence

*Eternal Nightmare (Megatone)*

★★★★

Machine Head's Rob Flynn with his Bay Area speed-metal/hardcore crossover band during its early-'90s heyday. The package's second disc features a less-dated yet Flynn-less reunion concert from 1991.

—BK



## SUPER UNKNOWN Guitarists You've Gotta Hear!



### Oz Noy

**HOME** New York, NY  
**AXE** Fender Reissue Strat  
**AMPS** Fender Twins  
**FX** Line 6 DL4; Ibanez compressor; Fulltone Choral Flange, Ultimate Octave, and Octave Fuzz; Boss Pitch/Delay, Maxon Overdrive  
**ESSENTIAL LISTENING** Oz Live  
**WEB** [oznoy.com](http://oznoy.com)

Imagine Jeff Beck meets John Scofield in James Brown's band, and you might get the picture. According to Oz Noy, this mélange is the product of precociousness and hard work. "Somewhat, I got into jazz at a really young age," he says. "A year after I started playing [at 10], I was listening to Joe Pass."

After learning all of Wes Montgomery's solos, Noy realized that he had a problem with the hollowbody guitar sound. "I love when Jim Hall does it, or Wes [Montgomery], but I could never put myself in there," he relates. "I was always into sounds, because I liked pop and rock. I tried to combine it [with jazz] but it took years." The revelation came after forming a blues/rock band. "I realized there's no difference between playing [love] a funk groove or swing. I can still play the same stuff," he laughs.

Though possessed of monster chops, technique is not the main thing for Israeli-born Noy. "For me, it is all about the groove and the sound." That said, he is capable of tearing off blistering fumes of single notes that don't sound quite like anyone else, while managing to maintain an undeniable internal logic. "I just play what I hear," he avers.

Though there is no way to describe the high-energy jamming on the CD without using the "F" word, Noy and company manage to put the fun back in fusion. He says, "People come up to me and say, 'I don't like this kind of music, but I like what you do.'"

—MICHAEL BOSS

# Apartment 26

New Lease on Old-School Rock

Prepare for the second coming. Apartment 26 released their debut album back in 2000, but as far as Jon Greasley's concerned, this time it's for real. Says the guitarist, "It's only been in the last few years or so where I feel like I've come into my own as a player."

*Music for the Massive*, the band's second album and its debut for Atlantic Records, is a tough collection of microwaved rhythm, sub-guttural riffage, and sci-fi texture. Producer Tchad Blake rolled out the analog tape machines, and the band took full advantage. "He makes records the way people used to make records," says Greasley, "with actual musicians actually playing on them, as opposed to kids with backwards comps hashing together some vague approximation of playing the guitar and then having some Pro Tools engineer chop it up and put it into place."

As a teenager, Greasley took proper lessons, but it didn't satisfy his inner cravings. "It was like, 'Learn these scales and learn these chord shapes,' and I never really cared, because I was just excited about music. All I wanted to do is put in a Nirvana

or Rage record and just jam on it." It was Rage, specifically, that shaped him as a player. "[Tom] Morello's playing is so inventive and like no one else's; I learned all his tricks, and then came up with my own."

That's not to say Greasley will be graduating from "rock school" anytime soon. After all, it took him a while to fully comprehend how influential Apartment 26 singer Terence "Biff" Butler's dad—Black Sabbath bassist Geezer Butler—was to previous generations. "I never fully appreciated it until I saw them play," he admits. "And then you start talking to guys like Pantera, who got together because of Black Sabbath. Pantera have had a huge impact on the way I play; they're the reason we started a band."

Such enlightenment has led Greasley to expand his range of influences. He explains: "There haven't been many great rock records the past few years. So when you get bored with what's going on now—which I frequently do—you can go back and listen to some old-school hard rock from 25 or 35 years ago, stuff you never really listened to, and it's like listening to a new record."

—ROB O'CONNOR

**GUITARIST** Jon Greasley **ALBUM** *Music for the Massive* (Atlantic) **AXES** Ibanez IG 7-strings, EMG 707 pickups **AMPS** Line 6 Vetta II **FX** Digitech Whammy 4, Line 6 DL4, Levatone Meathall, Vox wah