



It feels strange to point this out during a year in which so many bad, no good, completely awful things have happened but: 2021 was a really good year for music! There were a number of great records that seemed to have been made *about* 2021, even though they obviously weren't. And there were records that felt like antidotes to the madness we were experiencing each and every day via our social media feeds and front windows. Music can be a mirror, and it can also be a balm. This year abounded with examples of both. Before we head into 2022 with hopes that it will be a better year than the last, we'll be spending the closing weeks of December looking back at some of our favorites from 2021 here at Indie Mixtape HQ.

-- Steven Hyden, Uproxx Cultural Critic and author of *This Isn't Happening: Radiohead's "Kid A" and the Beginning of the 21st Century*

## ***In case you missed it...***

The recent *Indiecast* visualizer reviewed the sprawling docuseries *The Beatles: Get Back*. Check that out [right here](#), and revisit the full collection of *Indiecast* visualizers [here](#).

The [latest episode](#) of *Indiecast* had Steve and Ian answering questions from listeners about everything from their favorite

music books to which band is better: TV On The Radio or Wolf Parade. Send your questions for Steve and Ian to [indiecastmailbag@gmail.com](mailto:indiecastmailbag@gmail.com).

**Roger Taylor** said that **Sacha Baron Cohen** "would've been utter shit" playing Freddie Mercury in *Bohemian Rhapsody*. We listed the best albums of 2021 that might have flown under your radar.

The latest **Indie Mixtape 20** Q&A is with **Anxious**, who love to watch skateboarding videos.



## GIVEAWAY ALERT

Calling all Green Day fans: We're hooking one lucky Instagram follower up with an Epiphone Billie Joe Armstrong Les Paul Junior guitar with deluxe features and a leopard lined case.

**ENTER TO WIN**

**OPENING TRACKS**



## ***THE WAR ON DRUGS***

It remains to be seen whether *I Don't Live Here Anymore* will be The War On Drugs' most successful LP, but it is undeniably their catchiest and most engaging. It's also loaded with the sort of grandly uplifting rock gestures that Adam Granduciel is so good at making.

**LISTEN**



***LOW***



***JAPANESE BREAKFAST***

How many bands have had a career arc like this Minnesota institution? While 2018's *Double Negative* was possibly a more shocking record, completely deconstructing Low's slowcore ballads into discombobulated static, *Hey What* is ultimately more inviting, extending the previous album's innovations while renewing the focus on Alan Sparhawk and Mimi Parker's elemental harmonies.

**LISTEN**

With the third Japanese Breakfast LP, *Jubilee*, Michelle Zauner has made a rich and expansive "level up" record. Throughout the LP, bright pop arrangements enhance the emotional authenticity of the lyrics, making for a compulsively listenable album even as it cuts deep, evoking the mid-aughts indie classics that inspired Zauner.

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### ***TONSTARTSSBANDHT***

The #indiejam album of the year. This Florida duo has been kicking around for more than decade, and they have a sizable body of work that includes 16 albums released since 2008.

But *Petunia* feels like a culmination of their years spent experimenting with a mix of psychedelia, krautrock, folk rock, and electronic music.

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### ***ROSALI***

Blessed with a stunning voice that's reminiscent of Chrissie Hynde — she's covered The Pretenders' "Birds Of Paradise" with her pals in The War On Drugs — Rosali turns in a set of slow burners on this year's *No Medium* that benefit greatly from the Crazy Horse-like backing of the David Nance Group.

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## **VINYL OF THE WEEK**

***THE BLACK KEYS - 'EL CAMINO' 10TH ANNIVERSARY SUPER DELUXE EDITION VINYL BOX SET***



It's hard to believe that The Black Keys' mega-smash *El Camino* is already a decade old. To celebrate the anniversary, the band has unveiled a series of commemorative box sets, like this Super Deluxe Edition. Included in the Super Deluxe are five vinyl LPs or four CDs, featuring a remastered version of the original album, a previously unreleased Live in Portland, ME concert recording, a BBC Radio 1 Zane Lowe session from 2012, a 2011 Electro-Vox session, an extensive photo book, a limited-edition poster and lithograph, and a “new car scent” air freshener. Don't sleep on this gold (on the ceiling)!

**PICK IT UP**

**THROWBACK**

***'HURRY UP, WE'RE DREAMING' by M-83***



This synth-pop epic turned 10 this year, but its power to overwhelm the senses and cause tears to magically fall from our eyes make it seem as though it came out yesterday.

**LISTEN**

## LINER NOTES



*Counting Crows' 'A Long December' Is The Best Holiday Song*

This absurdly detailed analysis of the 1996 alt-rock hit proves it.

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