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Last month, [Frank Ocean](#)'s first proper album *Channel Orange* turned 10, which naturally prompted writers to sing the praises of the highly acclaimed 2010s landmark. Except the critical love was curiously qualified in the same, specific way. For instance, [Rolling Stone noted](#) that Ocean's second LP, 2016's *Blonde*, has "arguably outshined *Channel Orange* in scope and impact." Similarly, [Stereogum also suggested](#) that *Blonde* has "arguably eclipsed [*Channel Orange*] in terms of influence and prestige." For those keeping score, *Channel Orange* "arguably" is now down to *Blonde* in scope, impact, influence, and prestige. That's four — count 'em four! — indicators of "greatness," all leaning in the opposite direction away from *Channel Orange*. Actually, as far as critical consensus goes, "arguably" almost seems unnecessary at this point. Initially released to enthusiastic but somewhat reticent reviews — many critics, [including yours truly](#), found it to be somewhere between a masterpiece and an incomplete mess — *Blonde* has indeed over time overshadowed (or "outshined" or "eclipsed") its predecessor. But is that fair? Let's [compare and contrast these albums here](#) to determine which is better.

-- 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...

Rick Astley's 'Never Gonna Give You Up' video director **has also been Rickrolled**... and he's not a fan.

Tom DeLonge may have just hinted he's **back in Blink-182** at last.

Metallica **rocked out with *Stranger Things* actor** Joseph Quinn backstage at Lollapalooza.

Our latest **Indie Mixtape 20 Q&A** is with **Wombo**, who bring organized chaos to their new album *Fairy Rust*.

OPENING TRACKS



RINA SAWAYAMA

This budding indie-pop star is among the buzziest acts to emerge in recent years, with an ear-catching sound that's like Carly Rae Jepsen if she spent years obsessing over Korn's *Follow*

The Leader. That pan-genre approach ultimately informs Sawayama — who was born in Japan and raised in London — and her aesthetic.

LISTEN



JULIA JACKLIN

What is it in the water in Australia that has produced so many excellent funny/sad observational singer-songwriters? Julia Jacklin is part of a bumper crop that also includes Courtney Barnett and Alex Lahey. Her previous album, 2019's *Crushing*, was a breakthrough, and the forthcoming *Pre Pleasure* should represent another progression.

LISTEN

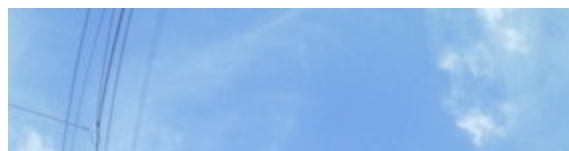
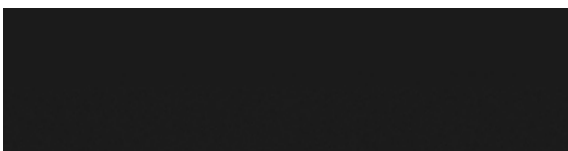


WILD PINK

A Billion Little Lights by this Indie Mixtape favorite was one of the best albums of 2021, integrating Americana instrumentation like pedal-steel guitar and fiddle into their usual synth-rock mix, producing an even more epic surge. Somehow, their forthcoming album *ILYSM* might be even more epic and another AOTY contender.

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DEEP CUTS





THE AFGHAN WHIGS

When it comes to '90s indie legends, you can't ever sleep on the great Greg Dulli.

Whether he's making solo records like the recent *Random Desire* or working in the Twilight Singers, he's always excellent. And then there's the immortal Afghan Whigs, who return with the upcoming *How Do You Burn?*

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2ND GRADE

This sorta supergroup culled from Philadelphia's thriving DIY scene specializes in very short and very catchy power-pop songs that split the difference between smart-ass punk and wised-up '90s indie. 2020's winning *Hit To Hit* lived up to the boastful title, and we expect the new *Easy Listening* (out in September) to also deliver.

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VINYL OF THE WEEK

'JUNO' (MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE) LP





The soundtrack to Oscar winning movie *Juno* is well known for its indie rock theme, featuring artists such as The Kinks, Belle & Sebastian, Sonic Youth, Mott The Hoople, The Velvet Underground and Cat Power amongst others. Pre-order the soundtrack on neon green vinyl, which has not been available since its original 2007 pressing.

PICK IT UP

THROWBACK

'DOG MAN STAR' by SUEDE

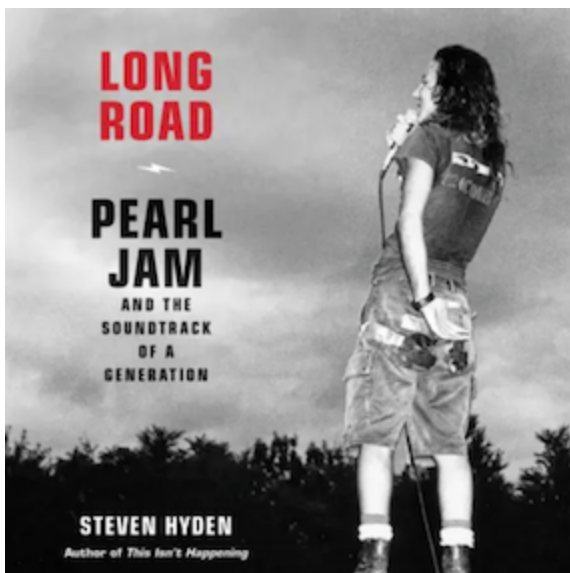


During the Britpop craze of the mid-'90s, one great British band that never crossed over in America was Suede — known here as The London Suede — a gleefully arrogant glam-rock outfit that sounded like the Smiths' lost *Ziggy Stardust* period. The band's 1993 self-titled debut is a classic, but we love the “strung-out on

fame and drugs” follow-up, *Dog Man Star*, even more.

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LINER NOTES



Pre-order Hyden's new book

Steven Hyden's new book, *Long Road: Pearl Jam and the Soundtrack of a Generation*, is a deep dive into one of the most popular rock bands of the '90s. It's out September 27, but you can pre-order now.

CHECK IT OUT

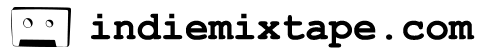
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