

Coffee-Table Books to Make Santa's Bag Sag

Written by John M. James

Wednesday, 10 December 2008 02:16

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Santa and your friendly postal carrier might be wishing that everyone gave digital gifts this year, as gift cards and iTunes credits surely lighten the load of their sacks. I'm sorry, St. Nick, but the perfect gift to thrill the music fan might be one of four new coffee-table books.

It's pure sensory overload in *Whole Lotta **Led Zepplin**: The Illustrated History of the Heaviest Band of All Time*

from Jon Bream and the Voyageur Press. At almost 300 pages, the colorful scrapbook tracks the band's genesis in 1968 through 1980 and beyond, with original tour posters, press kits, T-shirts, bootleg albums, patches, and ticket stubs. There's enough eye candy here to keep a fan drooling for a month. A graphic artist's and photographer's dream with their good looks and majestic, slightly sinister imagery, the band's run of album covers with designers Hipgnosis is worthy of entry to the

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Album Cover Hall of Fame, from the naked children of
Houses of the Holy

to the eerie black statuette of

Presence

. Do you remember the brown-paper-bagged LPs of 1979's

In Through the Out Door

? With the possibility of six different jackets within, each held another secret: hidden dyes printed with the ink that revealed colors when the jacket got damp. Trippy stuff indeed, if a beer got spilled. Top rock journalists add commentary, alongside interviews with recording engineers and anecdotes from

Ace Frehley

,
Ted Nugent

,
Kid Rock

,
Steve Earle

,
Jon Bon Jovi

, and

Ray Davies

. One inclusion is a long-lost gem: William S. Burroughs' "Uranium Willie & the Heavy Metal Kid: A Near Forgotten Talk with Jimmy Page," originally published in the June 1975 issue of *Crawdaddy*

. Year-by-year tour dates are also included, helping me finally pinpoint that spring in '77 and all the memories that went with it.

More Hipgnosis bliss is in fourth edition of *Mind Over Matter: The Images of **Pink Floyd*** by Storm Thorgerson and Peter Curzon. The Omnibus Press adds 30 pages to this edition, revealing more about the making of 14 original album covers, as well as box sets, posters, re-issues, DVD menus, and eventually a massive airship. Highlights include concept sketches, the twin eyeballs of

Pulse

, a stained-glass creation of

Dark Side of the Moon

, the giant chair from 1997's 30th-anniversary celebration, and early infrared experiments. Also brought up-to-date are later collaborations on solo albums and tours, including

Roger Waters

' 2006 tour performing

Dark Side of the Moon

in its entirety.

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Does **Robert Pollard** ever sleep? A prolific songwriter who flicks out melodies like a Vegas blackjack dealer, the **Guided By Voices** helmsman is a busy visual provocateur as well, as deadly with a glue-stick as he is with a recording studio. One of the things that make the plethora of releases from his many aliases so special and intimate is the running thread of cover art by Pollard himself, a former elementary-school teacher and silent, thought-provoking master of collage. More than 180 of his favorites, including a dozen new works, are collected in *Town of Mirrors: The Reassembled Imagery of Robert Pollard* from Fantagraphics Books. As lo-fi as it gets with just scissors and paste, Pollard creates juxtapositions that collide into little stories and secrets.

The world of country music lost a dear friend earlier this year when **Leon Kagarise** died. Traveling the East Coast with a bulky reel-to-reel tape recorder in a suitcase, he followed the country radio star circuit commonly playing in outdoor parks or on backwoods stages. Leaving behind more than 4,000 hours of live performances and lost radio shows, Kagarise left another legacy: more than 700 color slides he snapped over the years with his \$20 Zeiss Ikon camera. These photos are presented in the stunning *Pure Country: The Leon Kagarise Archives, 1961-1971* from the Process/Daniel 13 Books imprint. All the greats are here:

Johnny Cash

,

Roy Acuff

,

Grandpa Jones

,

Pee Wee King

,

Jim Reeves

,

Bill Monroe

,

Porter Wagoner

, and a young

George Jones

, sporting a tight crew cut and a bad-ass black suit. Also included is the story of Kagarise's collection of 250,000 records and examples of the original poster art advertising

Kitty Wells

,

Loretta Lynn

, and others at West Grove, Pennsylvania's Sunset Park.

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New Releases Coming Tuesday, December 16

All- American Rejects - *When the World Comes Down* (Doghouse/Interscope) featuring the single "Gives You Hell"

Keyshia Cole - *A Different Me* (Geffen) transforming a lost Tupac Shakur track, "Playa Cardz Right," into a studio-created posthumous duet

Fall Out Boy - *Folie a Deux* (Island) exposing "a madness shared by two"

Ghostface Killah - *Ghostdeini the Great* (Def Jam) hits and remixes packed with guests Amy Winehouse, Raekwon, Kanye West, and Mary J. Blige

Madison Park - *Another Yesterday* (Basic Lux Records) slipping in the perfect space between Everything but the Girl and a DJ crateful of singles from Fashion and Spandau Ballet, the club-royalty duo of DeAnna and James Cool return with an album that fuses flamenco guitar with the iciest of uptown beats

My Chemical Romance - *Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge* (Reprise) red-vinyl LP edition with a bonus stencil, sticker, and lyric sheet

Spinnerette - *Ghetto Love* (SpinneretteMusic.com) digital-only EP from Brody Dalle's new band, with guest Jack Irons

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The Twilight Sad - *The Twilight Sad Killed My Parents & Hit the Road* (Fat Cat) on tour now with Mogwai; this collection of odds and ends features instrumentals and covers of Joy Division's "Twenty-Four Hours" and The Smiths' "Half a Person"

The Wombats - *Is This Christmas?* (14th Floor Records) with guest Les Dennis, this import-only CD and seven-inch single supports Mencap with all its proceeds

various artists - *A Factory Box Set* (Rhino) limited-edition four-CD set documenting the iconic label, highlighted by splendid selections by The Durutti Column, Section 25, Happy Mondays, and of course Joy Division and New Order