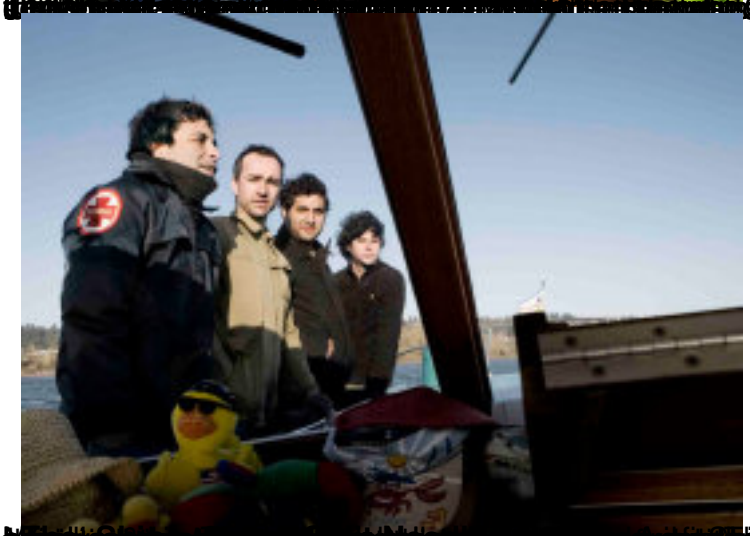
This isn't a list of the "best" songs of 2007, or even my favorites. It's a personal 2007 compilation that tries to capture my experience with music over the past 12 months. The songs are meant to play off each other - sometimes in obvious ways, often not - and there's a purpose to the sequencing.

My goal is simple: to give readers some ideas for new listening, or perhaps to spur you to go back to an artist you'd dismissed. There are a lot more familiar names in this year's mix than last year's, and that's because of the accelerating fragmentation of the music market; it seems increasingly difficult for anything to capture the public's imagination for more than a few seconds.

So here are 18 songs that I felt deserve more love than our short cultural attention span typically allows.

Noisettes, "The Count of Monte Christo." Forgive me for finding Amy Winehouse's acclaimed *Back to Black* more than a little dull, but for me the soul singer of the year was Shingai Shoniwa of the Noisettes. Like Gnarls Barkley last year, the Noisettes put the heart of soul into a new context. The trio's *What's the Time, Mr. Wolf?* is more in the rock vein than Winehouse's record and more conventional than Gnarls Barkley's, but the settings are well-suited to Shoniwa's versatile voice, covering a range from powdered sugar to full-throated growls, with an endearing squeak that sneaks through occasionally. The band's songs take nothing for granted, with equally delicious detail in the vocals and the music. "The Count of Monte Christo" is lovely in its core elements - with a delicate interplay of fluttering acoustic guitar and male and female vocals - but the band keeps building on it and taking detours. The pop song is a circular form with its verses and choruses, and while "Count" follows that basic structure, it never treads the same ground twice, always surprising.

PIANNEY WHITE CHALK



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