

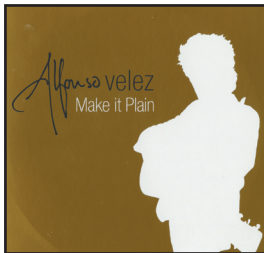
# CD REVIEWS

By Alfredo Flores, Robert Fulton, Joel Sparks, and Lars Garvey Laing-Peterson

## Alfonso Velez

Make it Plain

www.alfonsovelezmusic.com



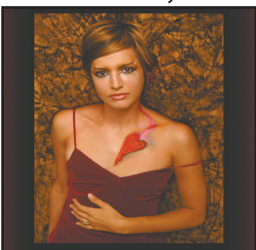
I suppose as editor of this publication, I could rig our beer rating system and increase the amount that a great album can receive. In fairness, I won't, but it's safe to say that former DC resident **Alfonso Velez**' **"Make it Plain"** would be off the charts. This is one of the best CDs I've heard in a long time. Not a bad track here. Alfonso takes his troubadour stylings and pairs it with a full band, including keys and horns. The sound is seducing and refreshing. His voice is crisp, clear and complimented by the added instrumentation. In another universe, Velez could be one of those "voices of a generation" types. But we're in this universe, and what we have is a flawless, timely effort. Key tracks: "Isabelle's Jinx," "Eye of the Hurricane," "End of the World Blues," "U Street Regalia," "Dear John," and "Marionette." — RF



## Ellen Cherry

Heart Like a Lion

www.ellencherry.com



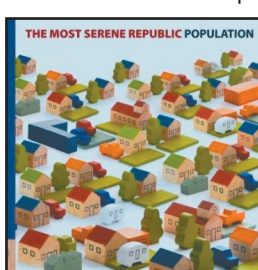
**Ellen Cherry** is a woman of mystery and a literary reference. She's also the alter ego of a DC-area singer-songwriter who's honed her playing, composition and singing skills for the last ten years. The latest result is **"Heart Like a Lion,"** and it shows off a varied talent that goes beyond the standard girl-with-guitar. The dozen tracks offer thinking-person's tough babe rock reminiscent of early Liz Phair ("Giddyup!", "Tri Song"); wistful but clever love songs ("I Hope to Dream of You Tonight", "Superhero"); the odd instrumental ("The Humming Waltz"); and effective musicality throughout. Check out the CD release January 20 at Iota. — JS



## The Most Serene Republic

Population

www.themostserenerepublic.com



The follow up to 2005's lauded and accomplished "Underwater Cinematographer," **"Population"** solidly secures **The Most Serene Republic** in Arts & Crafts' stellar roster. The first band on A&C to not directly stem from the massive, whirling Broken Social Scene project, The Most Serene Republic had a wary eye fixed on them from the get go, but silenced most of their critics with their debut album; the rest should follow suit after a listen to "Population." Creative, playful, and masterful, the world could use a few more bands like The Most Serene Republic; unafraid of stumbling over a few hurdles in order to push back

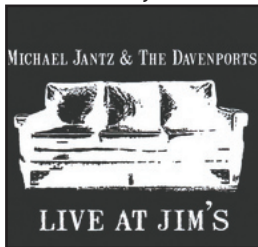


any constricting boundaries. — LGLP

## Michael Jantz




Live at Jim's

www.michaeljantz.com



Despite the name, this is not a concert EP. **"Jim's"** is the home studio of bassist Jim Donahue, and "live" means that all six songs are unprocessed first takes. **Jantz**, a popular local troubadour and showcase host, says that the band made these recordings "as soon as we could play them through," and a spontaneous energy comes through as a result. The addition of Chris Nammour on harmonica leavens the classic rock sound nicely, but be sure to listen past the Dylan-like harp to the talented songwriting. A fun disc, and "live" enough to be a good preview of the CD release at Iota on January 20. — JS



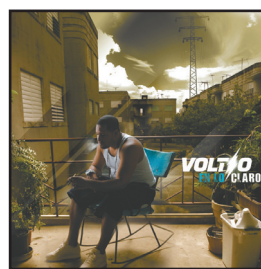
 **SPILT BEER**
 **HALF BEER**
 **FULL BEER**

**4 BEERS = EXCELLENT!**  
**3 BEERS = GOOD**  
**2 BEERS = AVERAGE**  
**1 BEER = POOR**  
**SPILT BEER = PARTY FOUL**

## Voltio

En Lo Claro

www.voltioonline.com



With a nickname like "voltage" in Spanish — given to him after getting shocked while working as an electrician — **Voltio** certainly knows how to bring electricity to everything he touches. In previous albums he plugged into the reggae and salsa of his native Puerto Rico. Now in his third studio release, he has deftly expanded his repertoire to include more gruff-sounding hard core Spanish rap, funk, cumbia, and even punk rock. The album's first single "El Mellao" has a catchy accordion tune combined with DJ scratches for a great party beat, as Voltio fondly remembers his electrician days cat calling girls on the street. Other notable tracks are the synthesizer-driven "Pónmela" featuring Jowell & Randy, a hot song with a hot beat about girls in mini-skirts, and the soulful R&B crooner song "Un Amor como Tú," which makes great use of featured guest Arcangel's vocal chops in the chorus. — AF



## Rasputina

Oh Perilous World

www.rasputina.com



Conceived as an all cello band, **Rasputina** has grown and evolved over their past six records, now lending their voice to that of musicians who have tried to compose a picture of post-9/11 America. Keeping up their brooding cabaret ambience, blending elements of steampunk, and allowing some distorted guitars to slip into the mix, Rasputina create a rather interesting, albeit flawed album. — LGLP



## Sadaharu

Resist. Revolt. Reclaim.

www.sadaharu.com



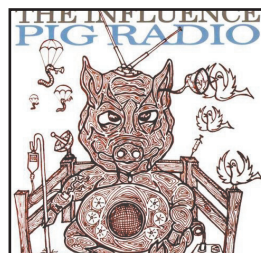
Engaging? Yes. Energetic? Hell yes. Though **Sadaharu's** "the Refused versus MC5" will be precisely what makes this album a gem to one person and a bundle of brash dissonance to another. Even for those of us who enjoy the quirk-ridden heaviness of the album, Sadaharu suffer from 'International Noise Conspiracy syndrome' — after a while, every song starts to sound the same. Great in small doses. Just put time between listenings and **"Resist. Revolt. Reclaim."** is worth investing in. — LGLP



## The Influence

Pig Radio

www.theinfluenceofmusic.com



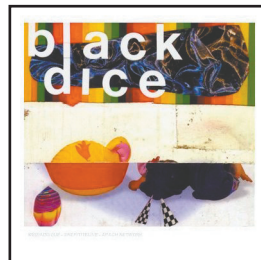
Virginians with a sound similar to that of Carbon Leaf and the Dave Mathews Band. The work of obviously talented musicians. — LGLP



## Black Dice

Load Blown

www.blackdice.net



I'm sure loyalists will use terms like "experimental," "challenging," and "complex" to describe **Black Dice's** music. Me, not so much. Other than a few interesting production tricks, 'Load Blown' operates on a frequency so annoying that you can almost forgive the baby shaking British nannies of the world. I almost lost control listening Black Dice, first thinking to throw my stereo out of the window instead of just hitting the 'pause' button on my iTunes. We should send **"Load Blown"** out to our secret prisons in Poland and tell them to empty the waterboarding tubs. Geneva Convention be damned. — LGLP

