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Stephin Merritt

("I think we need more post-coital and less post-rock") to acknowledging that no matter how bad an individual heartbreak feels, it likely wouldn't crack the world's All-Time Top 100. *Romance Is Boring* sticks to that theme, as the band shakes its collective head over and over at how people couple and uncouple, to the point that the album gets repetitive. (It might've made a better EP than LP.) But even at their brattiest, the Welsh indie-rockers in Los Campesinos are a tough lot to hate. Their cacophony of instruments and voices aptly conveys what the music is about. It's the sound of people shouting to be heard over the noise of a nightclub, underscored by the panic of realizing that they'll have to think of something to say when the music stops. —Noel Murray

Fucked Up
Couple
Tracks:
Singles
2002-2009
Matador
Grade: A



baby steps misses the point: Like a primer

flat-out fucking rocks. It's rife with cuts such as the catchy "Anorak City" and the corrosive "Black Hats," songs that prove conclusively that singer Damian Abraham is a go-for-broke, louder-than-life frontman on par with Jerry A. of Poison Idea, or John Brannon of Negative Approach. And even the collection's post-*Chemistry* tracks—including a ventilated, spaced-out version of "David Comes To Life," a high point of the group's 2006 breakthrough, *Hidden World*—feel more like the fearless experimentation of Big Boys or Crass than they feel like self-indulgence. Granted, Fucked Up's ambitious full-lengths are always going to snag the most attention. But when it comes to chronicling the group's heart, recklessness, and rabid devotion to the fine art of the punk anthem, *Couple Tracks* is the true classic. —Jason Heller

Retribution
Gospel
Choir
2
Sub Pop
Grade: B+

Retribution Gospel Choir's live sets have already proven that singer-guitarist Alan Sparhawk and bassist Steve Garrington don't sacrifice their meticulous sense of sonics when they step away from their main band, Low, to rock out with



drummer Eric Pollard. RGC's self-titled debut album in 2007 boasted a great set of songs, but the follow-up, *2*, dwarfs it in sheer dynamic scope. Sparhawk's aggressive riffs still anchor the sound, and Pollard's drum fills still evoke a graceful sandbag ballet, but pristine vocal harmonies and dub-style echoes sneak up to add another layer of gravity.

In spite of the unabashed riff-and-release of "Workin' Hard," *2* is no carefree trip to the biker bar. "Hide It Away," "Poor Man's Daughter," and "Bless Us All" only prove that the downcast songwriting Sparhawk perfected in Low can sting just as much, and as beautifully, with bellowing toms and extra currents of guitar whipping around it. The Low chills and classic-rock triumphs lock into perfect balance when the first chord of "White Wolf" strikes, like an invigorating winter wind or a snowball packed with ice. As if to make up for Low's "burned my guitar" heartbreaker "Death Of A Salesman," RGC mounts a slow, fiery airlift to glory on "Electric Guitar"—perfect, considering that *2* often feels like an eloquent love-letter to cranked-up Gibsons. —Scott Gordon

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ROB ZOMBIE

ROCK THE MOTHERFUCKER

NEW ALBUM

HELLBILLY DELUXE 2