

POP & HISS

latimes.com/pophiss

5 NIGHTS OUT

A curated calendar of live music not to be missed

WEDNESDAY

Bar Brothers
Where: Hotel Cafe,
1623 Chabunga Blvd.
Tickets/Time:
\$12, 7 p.m.

THURSDAY

Beat in Heaven
Where: The Echo,
1822 Sunset Blvd.
Tickets/Time:
\$12, 8 p.m.

FRIDAY

Chilly Gonzales
Where: Hollywood
Forever Cemetery,
6000 Santa Monica Blvd.
Tickets/Time: \$25, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY

Rodrigo y Gabriela
Where: Hollywood Palladium,
6235 Sunset Blvd.
Tickets/Time:
\$39.50, 8 p.m.

MONDAY

Garbage
Where: El Rey Theater,
5515 Wilshire Blvd.
Tickets/Time:
\$29.50, 7:30 p.m.

SIDE NOTES

It's hard to land a copy of this single

Look! Up in the sky — it's a ... new Jack White record? Yes, the White Stripes' founder chose April 1 to release a limited-edition single by helium balloon from his Third Man Records label headquarters in Nashville.

The track is "Freedom at 21" from his forthcoming debut solo album "Blunderbuss" due April 2. White and colleagues at Third Man filled 1,000 blue balloons approximately two feet in diameter with helium, attached flexi-discs and released them into the sky.

The stunt is described as "an experiment exploring non-traditional forms of record distribution and a way to get records in the hands of people who don't visit record shops." White's reps quickly pointed out that the balloons are made of biodegradable latex and were attached to the singles with natural twine, to ease concerns of eco-minded fans.

Informational postcards were also attached to the discs, encouraging people who find White's new single to report back to Third Man on where and when they made the discovery, and submit photos.

The typical recovery rate on similar balloon launches, according to Third Man, is around 10%, indicating that, perhaps as few as 100 copies



Third Man Records

A FARMER in Huntsville, Ala., found one of Jack White's balloon-released singles.

of the record will reach human hands.

An evolving map on the label's Web page, <http://thirdmanrecords.com/balloon>, showed two reported disc-oversies in Flintville, Tenn., about 100 miles southeast of Nashville, and another in Huntsville, Ala., about 100 miles to the south.

White has consistently cooked up unconventional recording, release and distribution campaigns since opening his Third Man complex in Nashville in 2009. He installed a Third Man pop-up store in downtown L.A. in 2009 when his band Dead Weather came through town on tour.

— RANDY LEWIS

ALBUM REVIEWS

Young Money/Universal

"Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded"
Nicki Minaj
(Young Money/Universal)

At her best, Nicki Minaj is, line for line, one of the wildest, most creative rappers out there. On the first half of her second album, "Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded," the Trinidadian American rapper from New York City trades verses with other catchy name rappers such as Lil Wayne, Drake, Nas and 2 Chainz and pushes them to step up with their own acerbic verses in response. On the effervescent bounce track "Beez in the Trap," she plays the queen of a hit that imitates Atlanta rapper 2 Chainz's buzzing-around.

But then, after the ridiculousness that is "See in the Lounge," the album ditches of a cliff. In a spectacularly unfortunate crash-and-burn, Minaj abruptly shifts gears, leaving behind the minimal, bouncy hip-hop tracks that highlight her charm and achievement in favor of 128-beats-per-minute dance pop as simple as it is generic.

The result is a disjointed, artistically confused release. For her own sake, it would be best if Minaj's "Roman Reloaded" falls as a commercial endeavor in the same way that its worst instincts fail artistically. Maybe then she'll stop trying to greedily be all things to all people and focus on what got her here in the first place: that ridiculous wit, wit and imagination.

— RANDALL ROBERTS

"Evolution"

Paul Van Dyk
(Vandit)

On "Evolution," his first album of new material since 2007, the German DJ-producer Paul Van Dyk brings a progression, not an antface: This A-list trance king-

pin has long studied his whooshing beats with catchy vocal hooks delivered by guest singers; "In Between," Van Dyk's previous studio set, contained collaborations with David Byrne and one of the Pussy-cat Dolls. But "Evolution" drives deeper into songfulness. The album's best track is also its most audacious: "Eternity," featuring Adam Young of Owl City. Their new tune more or less duplicates the sparkly wistfulness of "Fireflies" from 2009, which was a No. 1 hit, and could be an appealing riposte to dance music's purity squad. So, too, might "I Don't Deserve You," in which the singer Plumb channels the airy defiance of Kelly Clarkson.

— MIKAEL WOOD

"Screaming Females

Don Giovanni Records

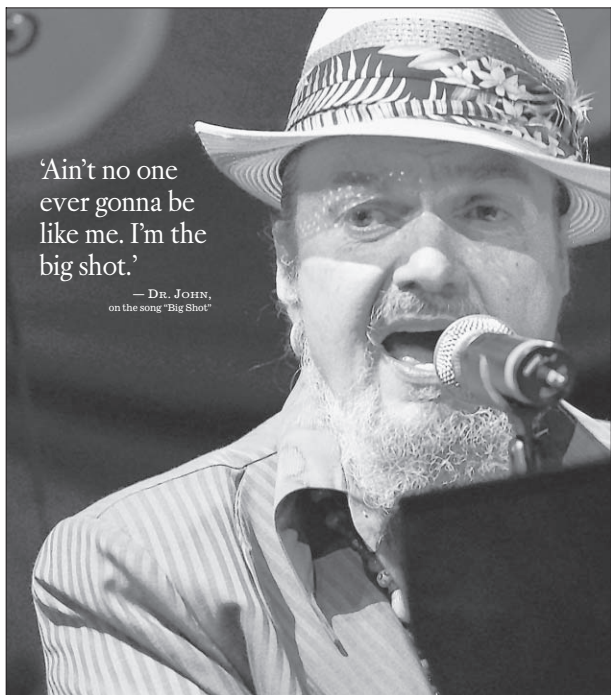
★★★★

Screaming Females anchor Marissa Paternoster is fully aware that she sounds on edge, and she doesn't appear interested in pulling back. "I don't get high," she declares on "5 High," from the band's new album, "Ugly," and then follows that up with a bone-rattling declaration, growling and howling "I can't unwind" through registers high and low. It's tense, but the tension is arresting.

At 14 songs and 53 minutes, "Ugly" is a workout, and there's nary a moment in which Paternoster doesn't seem at risk of losing control to her guitar. She's a shredder, and bassist Kirk Mike and drummer Jarrett Dougherty match her with a kind of fierce finesse. On this fifth album from the New Jersey trio and first recorded with underground hero Steve Albini, tracks unfold like mini hard-rock suites — "It All Means Nothing" skids from reverberating to vulnerability and "Leave It All Up to Me" has top-down war between a militaristic stomp and high-pitched guitar mysticism. "Ugly," ultimately, is about navigating the chaos of adulthood.

— TODD MARTENS

Albums are rated on a scale of four stars (excellent), three stars (good), two stars (fair) and one star (poor).



— DR. JOHN,
on the song "Big Shot"

"MAC" REBENACK created his alter ego 45 years ago, and the Dr. John persona has endured.

ALBUM REVIEW

A bayou elixir

Producer Dan Auerbach reunites the man with the myth on 'Locked Down.' The results are magical.

RANDALL ROBERTS

POP MUSIC CRITIC

It may come as a surprise that the character of Dr. John, whose new album, "Locked Down," comes out Tuesday, was birthed in Los Angeles. The mythical voodoo pianist-conjuror is so intertwined with the stories, scenery and rituals of New Orleans that to suggest he is anything but the embodiment of the bayou borders on heresy.

But Dr. John — that is, the persona created by New Orleans singer, songwriter and pianist Malcolm John Michael Creaux "Mac" Rebennack — was imagined and realized in the entertainment capital of the world after the young pianist moved west to find work as a session player in 1965. It was here, after hooking up with a posse of fellow New Orleans musician expats and playing on some big L.A. hits of the era, that Rebennack started brainstorming a solo career and struck up the idea of a persona.

The one he came up with has endured for 45 years and has become a New Orleans archetype, so much so that his less inspired work over the decades has bordered on self-parody. His producers' worst reflexes have been to highlight his New Orleans drawl, create funky rhythm, roll out a catchy melody on the piano, stir in some gumbo lyrics about second-line brass bands and then punctuate with horns.

But then, as if conjured out of the air, his new record, "Locked Down," arrives, and it is one of the best of his career. As Bob Dylan did with "Time Out of Mind" and Tom Waits did last year with "Bad as Me," Dr. John does here: exiting a period of relative creative stagnation by creating something magical, the embodiment of everything he's done but pushed in a clear new direction.

Produced in Nashville by Dan Auerbach, singer and guitarist for the Black Keys, "Locked Down" reunites the man (Rebennack is now 71 years old) who was inspired by James Booker, Professor Longhair and Fats Domino with the abstract mystic Dr. John.

In his 1994 autobiography, "Under a Hoodoo Moon," Rebennack describes that mystic as "a medicine man who claimed to be a prince of Senegal before he was abducted and taken to Cuba."

He came up with the idea while living with a community of roustabouts in a Melrose Avenue building mislead-

ingly called the Hollywood Executive Hotel and recorded Dr. John's debut album, "Gris-Gris," a swamp rock classic, at Gold Star Studios within of-hours studio time paid for by Sonny and Cher. This creation has endured through swamp rock gems such as "In the Wrong Place" and "Dr. John's Gumbo," both produced by New Orleans compa-

ny Allen Toussaint, and has found remarkable rejuvenation on "Locked Down."

This is due in no small part to Auerbach, who has merged the man with the myth by directing the project, compelling the band, playing guitar and setting a course.

As producer, Auerbach gathered the musicians, and what he came up with is stunning. Max Weissensfeldt, a drummer who has played with acts as varied as the Helio-centrics and the No Neck Blues Band and whose wild snare patterns propel songs from continent to continent with each measure, shines everywhere he hits. Horn arranger Leon Michelis is the founder of the Truth & Soul label, has collaborated with both soul crooner Lee Fields and Wu-Tang Clan's Raekwon; his brass bursts punctuate choruses and bridges. Bassist Nick Movshon's roaming basslines are all over Amy Winehouse's "Back to Black," and guide songs with both grace and urgency.

Rebennack cited West African instrumental music of the 1950s and '60s recommended by Auerbach as an influence on this record. It's especially noticeable on one of the album's most thrilling songs, "Evolution," which features a doubled-up baritone sax pushing forward a deep, driving melody that recalls Ethiopian Afro-jazz expert Mulatu Astatke, a humming organ solo by Rebennack that jumps around like a tripped-out Sun Ra treatout, and a wild but controlled drum excursion by Weissensfeldt.

Every instrumental break on "Locked Down," though, is as kaleidoscopic. In "Big Shot," the saxophone-heavy bridge arrives like a water balloon to the head, this big burst of joyous surprise. "Ain't no one ever gonna be like me," declares the doctor, and you've got no doubt that he's right. "I'm the big shot." (If David Chase were still making episodes of "The Sopranos," he'd no doubt have harnessed "Big Shot" for a bloodied murder scene involving Tony.)

Lyrical, though, the mask has been taken off, and we see Rebennack not only as a Saturday night voodoo king but also as a Tuesday morning man waking up after a weekend bender and trying to come to terms with what went down over the last 72 hours. Especially on the album's closing numbers, the erstwhile Dr. John offers intimate, personal lyrics about the importance of family and the generosity of God. "God's been better to me than I've been to myself," he sings on the closer, and he sounds both repentant and amazed to make it out the other side.

randall.roberts@latimes.com