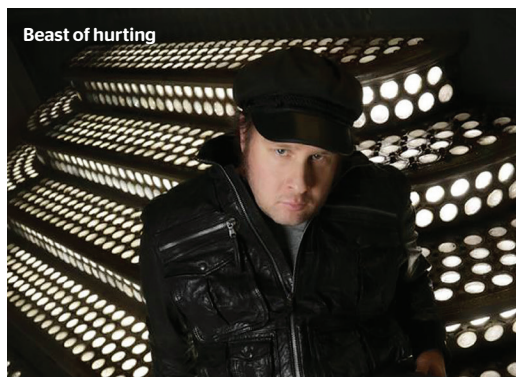




GET COMFORTABLE

JONNNY COUCH WRITES POP SONGS YOU CAN SINK INTO.

PITTSBURGH NATIVE JONNNY Couch left his Rust Belt hometown in the early aughts for the neon lights of NYC, where he played drums in a number of punk-rock bands. In the ensuing decade-plus, much of the neon was replaced by LED chasers, and Couch's interest in playing drums was supplanted by a lust to write songs and front a band. His debut effort, *Animal Instinct*, is a collection of warm, analog-synth-heavy pop songs that blend the dancey edge of New Romantic greats Visage and Ultravox with the softer tones of modern keyboard-driven popsters Future Islands and Tame Impala. The tunes are tightly crafted and hooky, but the real key is Couch himself: Friendly, slightly rotund and so committed to



JONNNY COUCH
Animal Instinct
(Self-released)

wearing a certain battered black cap that he mentions it in his press material, Couch comes across in person as at once self-deprecating and confident. On the album, he's a passionate lover, painfully aware of his shortcomings but hopeful that the object of his desire will forgive him and fall into his arms anyway. His vocal style is unique in that he achieves

a kind of '50s croon with the same success that a high-school DJ pulls off the smooth tones of a commercial radio announcer, which is to say that it sounds at once unpolished and charming. This lends an undeniable appeal to the entire effort, from "New Kind of Cruel," which would be right at home on the soundtrack to 1983's *Valley Girl*, to the dreamy "Animal Instinct," with its John Carpenter-level budget-synth punctuation marks, to the driving "State of Mind."

I once saw Couch and his band play in front of an auto-body shop in the middle of a white-hot day to about 12 people and a large washtub full of crawdads. Couch dropped sweating to the scorching sidewalk and reached out a trembling hand to a passerby. She stopped and gave him a chance. Maybe you should too! *Polly Watson*

MUSIC RECOMMENDATIONS



TUNE-YARDS
I Can Feel You
Creep Into My Private Life
(4AD)

➤ Tune-Yards's newest is a musical tonic for our planet's never-ending news horror cycle—a deconstructed pop album that manages to be both overtly political and foot-stompingly enjoyable. The bright ticky-tack funk of Merrill Garbus's genius musician-ship soars through the

album. But choruses like "I use my white woman's voice to tell stories of travels with African men" and "I want to be a woman if it means not being human" pull the LP into stark current relevance. While these references might age poorly, for the moment Tune-Yards's latest is an absolute must-listen. *Tommy Smith*



OF MONTREAL
White Relic/Irrealis Mood
(Polyvinyl Records)

➤ Of Montreal are back with their boldest statement to date, conceptualizing the "death of the toxic White Identity" plaguing America. Like the album name, each "double-song" is a pair of titles for an innovative two-in-one effect, both musically and lyrically. "If You Talk to Symbol/Hostility Voyeur"

traverses many a soundscape, as Prince-like beats swirl into experimental jazz. "Plateau Phase/No Careerism No Corruption" channels Barnes's best David Bowie-as-space-alien sensibility, while "Soft Music/Juno Portraits of the Jovian Sky" delivers on its prose promise with a colorful crescendo. *Mark Miller*

BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

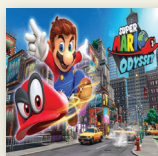


THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN AMERICA
Bill Minutaglio & Steven L. Davis

➤ In 1970, charismatic psychedelic advocate Timothy Leary was serving a 10-year sentence, ostensibly for possession of two joints, but in reality it was because the establishment feared that the counterculture was prevailing in the struggle for America's future, and Leary had to be silenced. After

breaking out of prison with the aid of the revolutionary Weather Underground, Leary led the authorities on a two-year manhunt, and the authors have written a thrilling adventure story full of utopian ideals, hair-raising near-misses, trippy scenes and heartbreaking deceit. *Michael Simmons*

VIDEO GAME RECOMMENDATIONS



SUPER MARIO ODYSSEY
(Available on the Nintendo Switch)

➤ While the countless spin-offs can be hit-or-miss, the main Mario games always offer a special kind of magic that only Nintendo can capture. The same can be said for *Super Mario Odyssey*.

First things first: The portability the Nintendo Switch offers is incredible. Mario isn't locked to your TV and you aren't getting a "mobile" Mario experience—Mario travels with you and you're getting the real thing.

Odyssey finds Mario, Peach, Bowser, Yoshi and the rest of the gang looking the best they ever have, with crisp textures and beautiful weather and environment effects. That makes exploring

the new worlds that much more enjoyable, particularly New Donk City, a not-so-subtle reference to the hustle and bustle of NYC. The more than 900 collectible moons mean you'll explore every inch of these worlds, but the pure magic and joy of Mario never fades.

Super Mario Odyssey is exactly as great as you think it is. And, along with *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, SMO is a great case study on why the Switch is a must-have. The love crafted into this game is evident with every jump and spin, and we're lucky the folks at Nintendo invited us to enjoy it with them. *Casey Holiday*