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This Month's Soundtrack, November 2009

Nov 1, 2009 12:00 PM, By Mike Levine

These CDs encompass a range of production methods and musical styles, including heavy-metal electronic music, acoustic indie rock, avant-garde singer/songwriter tracks and Pakistani-influenced pop.

MOLDOVER: MOLDOVER (MOLDOVER)

With progressive heavy-metal electronica played on software instruments, guitars and a circuit-bent Speak & Spell — and packaging that includes an optical Theremin on a custom circuit board — the debut album by self-described controllerist Moldover rocks.

— Geary Yelton



In this excerpt from the track "Say It," Moldover demonstrates just how funky a circuit-bent Speak & Spell can sound in the hands of a skilled controllerist.

TAKEN BY TREES: EAST OF EDEN (ROUGH TRADE)

Taken By Trees is the project of singer Victoria Bergsman. She and guitarist Andreas Söderström traveled through Pakistan and recorded with local Sufi musicians, whose ethereal and haunting instrumental tracks, combined with Bergsman's vocals and Söderström's guitars, make for an original and intriguing blend.


Here's a [link](#) to stream the song "Watch the Waves" from the Taken By Trees album *East of Eden*. Most of the players on here are Sufi musicians, recorded by Taken By Trees in Pakistan.



DAVID SYLVIAN: MANAFON (SAMADHISOUND)

Sylvian, a recording artist with a long and varied musical history, serves up a collection of songs that feature his present, resonant vocals contrasted with minimalist backing tracks that often lean toward dissonance. They were recorded by a group of esteemed instrumentalists (mostly acoustic), who were encouraged to improvise what Sylvian terms "a completely modern kind of chamber music."

This excerpt from the David Sylvian song "Rabbit Skinner" shows the unique instrumental approach (which Sylvian terms "modern chamber music") that is used throughout *Manafon*.



THE ECHO FALLS: THE ECHO FALLS (VINELAND RECORDS)

This San Francisco Bay Area trio's debut CD, much of which was recorded on a laptop, features intelligent, acoustic-tinged indie rock. The band includes guitarist/vocalist Alex Mandel (who has scored short films for Pixar), drummer Dave Brandt and bassist David Arend.

Here's a [clip](#) from the song "Road to Parnassus" from the self-titled debut of Bay Area-based trio the Echo Falls.



FIVE TIMES AUGUST: LIFE AS A SONG (SEVEN PLACES MUSIC)

Five Times August (aka Brad Skistimas) is an independent artist who has had success building his own fanbase and licensing his music to TV. He even got his CDs into Walmart, a first for an independent artist. For this project, he collaborated with producer Andy Zulla (Kelly Clarkson and Jessica Simpson), and the result is a set of very catchy and well-produced acoustic pop.



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This collection of St.Croix's columns was assembled during the two years following his death of cancer in May 2006. Included are many of his most-read columns, as well as personal notes, drawings and photographs.

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