

handed aesthetic while the limber rhythm section of bassist Keiffer Infantino (with bone-rattling distortion) and drummer Dana Filloon (vacillating from jazzy ride cymbal patterns to all out bombast) abruptly alter tempos and dynamics, lifting the songs off the ground. From the anthemic chord progressions of "From The Isle of the Blessed" to the razor sharp, plodding doom of companion pieces "Elan Vital" and "Elan Fatale," Junius' appeal to metal heads and modern rock fans is evident from the start. Sure, Martinez' pathos follow the Gahan/Robert Smith blueprint a little too closely in some instances, yet this band defies the retro tag with room to spare, which is a very good place to start.

-TOM SEMIOLI

## Kid Dakota

### *The West Is The Future*

Chair-Kickers Music

Although the songs on Kid Dakota's third album *The West Is The Future* feature seemingly disparate characters, they are all unified by the same themes. Whether it's the fourteen-year-old expectant mother and her "blood-related" forty-year old boyfriend of the murky and haunting "Pine Ridge," or Ivan, the disaffected "Moscow-bound" narrator of the rootsy stomper "Ivan," the inhabitants of these compositions all seem to be leading quietly desperate lives marked by an unwillingness to face their own mistakes. In fact, when front man Darren Jackson sings on "Pine Ridge," "Got a lot of good people doing bad things," it comes across as the album's thesis statement.

But while the characters here struggle through their troubled emotional landscapes, the landscape is at work, too. The apocalyptic rocker "Winterkill" imagines a group of fishermen united in boozy silence by a bay of dead fish, while "Homesteader," acknowledges the importance of rain in a small county. The album closer, the spare ballad "Atomic Pilgrim" tries to shine a ray of hope on all this frozen sadness, and when Jackson declares, "Like a neon hotel sign/The West is the future," there seems to be a fighting chance—that a new geography really can melt away sadness. But

later he sings "The West is a new land/The West is an old lie," and it's hard to think anything is going to be different.

-ALEX GREEN

## Like Moving Insects

### *Musical Album*

AmBiguous City

Despite the generic title they've attached to their official debut release, Philadelphia quintet Like Moving Insects make a joyously cracked and wildly diverse noise on *Musical Album*. Like a master chef rooting through a refrigerator full of leftovers, LMI makes a full course sonic meal from the musical scraps of a dozen different genres. LMI imagines a studio where Burt Bacharach produces klezmer bands ("Executive Elevator") while Neil Young fronts Centro-matic in the next booth ("A Cleanser") and Paul Weller hooks up with the folk/pop session players across the hall ("A Grey, Boiling, Cartoon Cloud Song") just as a Pavement reunion breaks out in a lobby filled with acoustic instruments ("We've Come a Long Way Since Morning") and everybody gets together for a hootenanny jam at the end of the day ("Fishing with Hounds"). Mournful and laconic with an undercurrent of resigned joy, Like Moving Insects are human kaleidoscopes, fracturing their brightly colored knowledge of the disparate generations of folk, pop, country and rock into a beautiful and original new pattern.

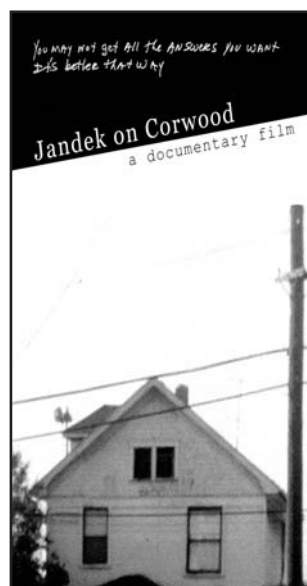
-BRIAN BAKER

## Low Water

### *Hard Words in a Speakeasy*

Self-Released

The debut album from this New York by way of San Francisco and Pittsburgh trio shows tremendous promise for a band who, after settling in their 3<sup>rd</sup> home base this year, will hopefully find their local audience. Channeling the uncluttered brilliance of Jeff Tweedy and infusing it with a raw Westergian swagger, *Hard Words in a Speakeasy* reads like the handbook for bridging modern Americana with rock 'n' roll out of the garage. There are very few predictable twists and turns and each song stands on its own as a snapshot of unique, unfettered



## Jandek on Corwood

### *A Documentary Film*

Directed by Chad Friedrichs

Produced by Chad Friedrichs and Paul Fehler

"I love Eric Clapton. But he's no Jandek."  
-GARY "PIG" GOLD

The origins of the phrase "a mystery wrapped in a riddle inside an enigma" have been lost to history, but, if it came about sometime in the last twenty-five years, it's reasonable to suspect that it was in connection to someone trying to describe the musician known as Jandek.

*Jandek on Corwood*, the Chad Friedrichs-directed documentary, in order to set the stage for those (like myself) who enter into the proceedings with absolutely no knowledge of Jandek, begins with the following words:

"In 1978, a musician released his first album, *Ready for the House*. It featured a lonely voice accompanied by acoustic guitar. His subsequent recordings made him one of the most prolific artists in contemporary music. Almost nobody has noticed. In 1985, John Trubee performed a phone interview with this musician, known as Jandek. It is the only successful attempt to interview the reclusive artist about his music in his 25-year career."

You'd be hard pressed to find a music fan that wouldn't be instantly sucked into a documentary that starts off in such a fashion. *Jandek on Corwood* (Corwood Industries is the company that sells Jandek's albums) plays like an extended episode of the '70s TV classic, *In Search Of*, and, believe me, that's high praise.

Frankly, Jandek's music isn't all that enjoyable a listen; to put it mildly. The instrumentation is generally an out-of-tune guitar, the vocals are mostly ghostly emanations, and to call the combination somewhat spooky isn't even remotely out of line. The odds of finding yourself listening to a Jandek album more than once seems somewhat slim...yet by the time the closing credits are rolling, you still find yourself wondering which of the man's thirty plus albums is most representative of his work and how much it'll set you back to score a copy of it.

Why?

It's an indie music status symbol, apparently...kind of like Captain Beefheart's *Trout Mask Replica*. You never actually have to listen to it; you just have to be able to produce a copy of it in case anyone hip comes to your house and wants to judge you based on your music collection.

Unlike many "rockumentaries," the film isn't set up to particularly praise Jandek. Sure, his fans are glad to gush about how wonderful his work is; people like Dr. Demento and K Records founder Calvin Johnson offer testimonies, as does the earlier-quoted Gary "Pig" Gold. But others gladly chat about just how weird Jandek's music is, or refer to him as "really talentless."

Oddly, the reason to watch this film about an enigmatic musician has little to do with the music itself. It's fascinating that someone has continued to prolifically produce his own music for so many years, and yet goes out of his way to avoid doing any interviews or making any public appearances; in fact, the only photographic record of the guy comes from his album covers.

The DVD of *Jandek on Corwood* comes complete with audio commentary, as well as other audio features, such as commentary on the various Jandek album covers and a sampling of various Jandek songs. There are even album reviews and articles on Jandek included for your reading enjoyment.

The odds of coming out of *Jandek on Corwood* a fan of the man's music depend on the breadth of your musical tastes. The odds of finding yourself fascinated by his story, however, are significantly higher.

-WILL HARRIS