

2007 Index

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Looking back through the my year's music reviews shows one very clear trend: a surprising number of ageing rock stars have released very fine, fresh albums. Steve Earl's Washington Square Serenade, Tom Verlaine's Songs and Other Things, and Bruce Springsteen's universally acclaimed Magic.' Two very good live Neil Young albums emerged from the archives, and Chrome Dreams II (this issue) also came about because of songs written, recorded, never released but rediscovered. Led Zeppelin's remastered Mothership sounds stunning and there are exciting rumours of more to come next year. Heartworn Highways, a collection of songs recorded in the early 1970s, is something really special. Restored and mastered on Rupert Neve's Legendary Audio Masterpiece mastering machine, it's one of the most direct and musically communicative CDs I've heard.

Mastering quality brings me onto one of the low points of the year. Arcade Fire's Neon Bible, an album of epic proportion and production, was almost ruined by ridiculous compression, and wasn't the only release to be treated so cruelly either. The curse of dreadful mastering particularly seems to affect albums that record companies are expecting huge sales from. Call me cynical but

It would be wrong not to mention some of the brilliant music put out by new bands over the past year. The mighty Tunng deserves mention for Good Arrows, while Laura Veirs and Jim White also released very fine sounding albums full of good and original songs. The other good news from 2007 is the number of younger people getting interested in and buying turntables and vinyl. Plenty of hope for the future then.

NIGEL FINN

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