

REVIEWS

broad pastiches of sound that are cinematic in scope and often fairly startling. Some, like "Hounds and Jackal" and "King's Table," are brief in length but pack plenty of intensity, while other tracks, including the ethereal "It's a Game," are larger than life in their surround-sound force.

Jeff Tamarkin

Jessica Pratt

Here In the Pitch MEXICAN SUMMER



Jessica Pratt has a voice that stays with you well after the song is over—and one that very possibly reemerges in the

surrealist dreams that fill your head once you fall asleep. It's a sliver of sound that somehow wills any others to fade into the background. The Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter has been wielding this most arresting instrument on her albums for nearly two decades, tracing back to her 2007 self-recorded solo debut, but her breakthrough came with 2019's devastating *Quiet Signs*. It was acoustic, late-night bewitching music—folk for casting spells. Now, with *Here In the Pitch*, Pratt has expanded the sparse sound of her previous work. But worry not—the additions here don't mess with the magic. Those comparisons to mystifying folkies Judee Sill and Vashti Bunyan (and, in a more contemporary scope, Joanna Newsom) still feel appropriate, but on *Here In the Pitch* she's dabbling more in the bigger, echoing sounds of *Pet Sounds*-era Beach Boys. Timpani, glockenspiel, saxophones and flutes all poke through the bed of delicately picked and plucked acoustic guitars that are more familiar on her songs. Mesmerizing feels like an appropriate word here, as even with the orchestral flourishes, nothing can take the focus away from Pratt's voice and accompanying guitar. On "Get Your Head Out," she's invited Mellotron and Rhodes keys to the mix, weaving together a retro-'60s technicolor dream sound—but Pratt's bossa nova-style strumming and her wafting-smoke vocals are singular. "I keep comin' back to what I left behind," she sings. "And well, you've got it bad/ Our sin's the lovin' kind." Deep listens feel like a peak through a portal, Pratt giving you a glimpse into another dimension. It's music that follows you from this world to the next. *Justin Jacobs*

Chris Kasper

Sunlight in an Empty Room

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY



With his seventh full-length release, *Sunlight in an Empty Room*, veteran singer-songwriter **Chris**

Kasper has crafted a soundtrack for taking it slow. Recorded with a small band in Nashville, the album maintains a casual, ambling pace throughout its

11 tracks. *Sunlight* opens with "Cold Cold World," where Kasper sings of a simple life over an unhurried rhythm section led by The Wood Brothers drummer and multi-instrumentalist **Jano Rix**. And "Getting Right" could easily be mistaken for a Wood Brothers tune, not only because it actually boats Kasper's longtime collaborator **Oliver Wood** but also because it covers similar lyrical ground, including the singer's plan to square up with his maker and "wash those sins away." (Wood is actually one of two big-name guests on the album—"Ain't it a Shame" features **G. Love** on harmonica.) Kasper isn't afraid to experiment with a variety of arrangements on tracks like "The Only Ones," "Cry Me a Creek" and "The Hotel Song," which aren't as straightforward as more traditional songs like "Summer in the City" and "When It's Gone." True to its title, the record sounds like it would somehow pair well with images of specks of dust floating in rays of sunlight—perhaps in a faraway barn with saddles, cowboy boots and other farming equipment strewn about. Whatever the locale, *Sunlight* will sound great as winter ends and spring begins. *Matt Hoffman*

DEHD

Poetry FAT POSSUM



In the process of planning out their fifth album, the members of **DEHD** left their Chicago home and traveled the country, writing and recording ideas

at various studios, hoping to capture the essence of life on the road. They returned to their warehouse in Chicago to finalize the songs, then cut them at Palisade Studios, with **Ziyad Asrar** (Whitney) co-producing with group member **Jason Balla**. The stripped-down sound that has served them so well is still in full effect here, as they deliver 14 sharp, concise tunes that nod to various genres in their arrangements. "Hard to Love" is a mid-tempo rocker, with bassist **Emily Kempf** adding a yodel to her vocal delivery, giving the tune a hint of old-time country music. (The ironic lyric describes her attraction to rough and tumble partners.) **Jason Balla** blends country and rap on "Necklace"—he strums minimal acoustic guitar chords to compliment drummer **Eric McGrady**'s basic rhythm, talking/singing about how much he misses his lover, counting the minutes until he'll be back home. The muted tapping of a cowbell and guitar hook, played in a lower register, introduce "Dist B." There's a hint of The Velvet Underground in the minimal melody, as Kempf describes her inability to deal with the end of a troubled relationship. She takes a different approach to a lost lover on "Magician." A descending bass line, brittle clanging guitar, a driving backbeat and her howling vocal describe the pain of seeing an old flame with someone new, knowing the only way to deal with the pain is to let it go. The trio takes a lighter look at relationships on

"Pure Gold," a R&B homage to good times and laughing together, despite the obstacles life can present.

J. Poet

Andy Aledort

In a Dream LONG SONG



If you want to get some idea of what **Andy Aledort** is all about, then you can start with the company he keeps:

For starters, he's performed with alumni of both Jimi Hendrix's Band of Gypsys and Stevie Ray Vaughan's Double Trouble, as well as The Allman Brothers Band's Dickey Betts. His praises have been sung by no less than Steve Vai, Warren Haynes and Joe Satriani. He's also served as an editor of several guitar magazines and has made highly popular instructional guitar DVDs. But the best way to get a sense of Aledort's breadth and depth is simply to listen to him play the guitar, and *In a Dream*, his latest release, is the ideal ticket for that. What makes it such a joy is that its eight tracks bare so little resemblance to one another—he's not one to find a comfy niche and imprison himself within. Aledort moves fluidly between styles here, from gruff roadhouse blues to melodic jazz informed by Zappa-esque harmonics and blistering fist-pumping rock. "Moonwaves," an older Aledort original that closes the album, is highlighted by a numbingly intense guitar solo that will have you wondering why he's not regularly mentioned in the same breath as



Jessica Pratt