

## TD's Top Ten for 2008

The music industry may be melting down, but there's more good stuff out there to listen to than ever before. My favorite album of the year was *Consolers of the Lonely* by **The Raconteurs**. Primal. Electrifying. Cleansing. But they've gotten too much attention in critical circles to make my official list, which celebrates my favorite, somewhat more obscure releases of the year.

### *The List*

#### **Ersi Arvizu** *Friend for Life* (Anti-)

Legendary 1960's El Chicano vocalist paints a vivid portrait of her life in music and boxing and her East L.A. roots in a series of story songs in English and Spanish, backed by family members and a superb group of local musicians recruited and produced by Ry Cooder. Unforgettable.

#### **Chiwoniso** *Rebel Woman* (Cumbancha) [www.chiwoniso.com](http://www.chiwoniso.com)

From the troubled land of Zimbabwe, Chiwoniso Maraire combines powerful vocals with lyrical *mbira* playing and an all-star backing band of some of South Africa's most respected musicians. Her songs deal with the healing power of elders, the struggles of the people, the natural beauty of the landscape and the role of women in Zimbabwe's war for independence. English translations provided. Beautiful and inspiring. (See also all-woman band **Les Amizones de Guinee** *Wamato* (Sterns Music)...delightfully funky).

#### **Danielia Cotton** *Rare Child* (Cottontown/Adrenaline) [www.danielia.com](http://www.danielia.com)

"I'm a little Black girl who's going to rock your world..." this one begins...and she definitely delivers. This is all-out power chord rock and roll from start to finish, with a powerful delivery comparable to Melissa Etheridge at her most passionate.

#### **Grupo Fantasma** *Sonidos Gold* (Aire Sol Records) [www.grupofantasma.com](http://www.grupofantasma.com)

From Austin, these guys tore up the house at last year's SXSW, and they'll have you shakin' your bootie within seconds. Just try to stay seated as you listen to this one. Powerful horns, driving Latin rhythms... ay caramba! Sizzlin!

#### **Bill Kaiwa** *Na Halia* (Makuakane Music) [www.mele.com](http://www.mele.com)

These days he's returned to his paniolo roots on Kauai, but in the 50's and early 60's he was a Waikiki headliner. This set of traditional Hawaiian tunes (no Tiny Bubbles schlock here) spotlights his wonderful, soulful voice, backed by a simple combination of slack key guitar, lap steel, bass and ukulele. Heavenly.

#### **Lil' Ed and the Blues Imperials** *Full Tilt* (Alligator Records) [www.alligator.com](http://www.alligator.com)

When the first few bars jump out at you from the speakers, you know what you're in for... magnificent, straight ahead, take no prisoners Chicago blues. This demands to be played loud! (see also **Michael Burks'** *Iron Man* on Alligator for another superb blues release. He rivals Albert King at his best as the new master of the Gibson Flying V).

**Janiva Magness** *What Love Will Do* (Alligator Records) [www.alligator.com](http://www.alligator.com)  
What a voice! An inspired, rockin' delightfully soulful set about affairs of the heart. She's no overnight sensation. She's lived a life, including years in foster care and as an emancipated minor, and she's got a story to tell. I was pleased to learn that she's a national spokesperson for Casey Family Programs, but that's not the reason to check this out. It's definitely one of the top releases of the past few years in my book.

**Eli "Paperboy" Reed & The True Loves** *Roll With You* (Q Division Records) [www.qdivision.com](http://www.qdivision.com) Blue-eyed soul tour de force! Smokin', high energy set that has the immediacy of a live performance. I guarantee you'll be bouncin' around the room doin' the "Boom Boom." This is another one that requires maximum possible volume to be properly appreciated.

**Solas** *For Love and Laughter* (Compass Records) [www.compassrecords.com](http://www.compassrecords.com)  
My favorite Celtic album of the year. Superb musicianship, beautiful vocals, gorgeous melodies... and leaves you feeling uplifted. Need I say more?

**The Weepies** *Hideaway* (Nettwerk Records) [www.nettwerk.com](http://www.nettwerk.com)  
Ignore the wimpy name and album art. This is melodic, intelligent contemporary folk/pop that's eminently listenable. Apparently their music has found it into the background of emo TV shows, but don't let that stand in the way of your enjoyment.

## Lagnaippe

**Ruby Dee and the Snakehandlers** *Miles From Home* (Dionysus Records) [www.dionysusrecords.com](http://www.dionysusrecords.com) Retro rockabilly heaven. If you've got a taste for twangy Telecasters, pedal steel and vocals from the heart, be sure to check this out.

**Laika & the Cosmonauts** *Cosmopolis 1988-2008* (Yep Roc Records) [www.yeproc.com](http://www.yeproc.com) Surf instrumentals, Telstar twang and Twilight Zone atmospherics merge in this career-spanning 27-track retrospective from the coolest Finnish combo ever. Great background music for scrolling through your e-mail.

**The Supreme Genius of King Khan and the Shrines** (Vice Records) [www.vicerecords.com](http://www.vicerecords.com) No holds barred, all-out punkadelic party music at its finest. Not for everyone, but there are those times when this is just what's called for!

## Resources

You're probably way ahead of me on this, but I came across another wonderful on-line resource for listening to and ordering this kind of music at [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com)

Also, one of my favorite Americana music magazines *No Depression*, has now morphed into a very informative website at [www.nodepression.com](http://www.nodepression.com)

We're in the initial stages of ramping up for a TD music website. Stay tuned!