

IN ROTATION

Tips from The Times' music staff on recommended new releases and reissues.

Roy Orbison

"The Monument Singles Collection: 1960-1964"

Life is hard. Terrible things happen. Hearts get broken. Women turn mean. Tears flow. Loneliness. Oh!

But out of such sadness comes Roy Orbison to manifest our heartbreak, to engulf our sorrow in rose petals, to comfort us. "The Monument Singles Collection: 1960-1964" is an essential document, one that deserves a spot in what remains of your CD shelf — even if by now you've got many of these songs in triplicate. From age 23 to 28, young Texan Orbison released a flow of singles on Washington, D.C., label Monument Records that remains astounding a half-century later: "Running Scared," "Only the Lonely," "Crying," "Blue Bayou," "In Dreams," "Oh, Pretty Woman," "It's Over," and "Dream Baby" among them.

The Monument set compiles the A sides of 20 of these singles in superior, remastered monaural versions on Disc 1, and their B sides on the second, and includes a DVD containing a live German television performance from 1965. The first disc contains all the songs you love, aural Prozac that can calm a restless mind; Orbison had the voice of an angel, filled as it was with compassion, bountiful energy and space. It's on the B sides that the surprises come: the soft, humming tenor saxophone that punc-

tuates "Pretty One," the harmonica intro to "Candy Man," as well as the uncharacteristically sassy, confident — and, OK, a little creepy — way in which he offers himself as a provider of sweetness. And "Leah" is the saddest song ever written.

The DVD captures the lush but subtle sound of seven musicians recreating these songs: two electric guitarists (in addition to Orbison on his hollow-body), a pianist, a keyboard player, bassist and drummer. The singer wears all black, dons sunglasses and hits every note. Here is the essence of smoothness, of calm, of heart.

— RANDALL ROBERTS



DAVID REDFERN Redferns/Getty Images

ROY ORBISON: Essential.

Matana Roberts

"COIN COIN Chapter One: Gens de couleur libres" (Constellation)

The New York-based saxophonist/sound artist Matana Roberts is a musical polymath if there ever was one: She's worked with artists and musicians ranging from hot-shot jazz pianist Vijay Iyer and modern-dance pioneer Merce Cunningham to rockers TV on the Radio and the cryptic Montreal post-

rock collective Godspeed You! Black Emperor!, whose longtime label Constellation released "COIN COIN" this year.

It's the first installment of a nebulous project that she calls "compositional sound language," drawing from ghost stories, African American history and a long musical conversation with her avant-garde jazz peers (some of it flinty and confrontational). The sprawling music pulls from the exhilarating deconstructions of Sun Ra, but Roberts' vocal style can transcend lyrics into something purely physical and essential.

— AUGUST BROWN

Washed Out

"Within and Without" (Sub Pop)

On music blogs over the last couple of years, the roiling debate over a genre ironically titled "chillwave" proved unavoidable. The aesthetic typically combines indie lo-fi with the glitch of bedroom electronica — and above all, a nostalgic embrace of '80s synth-pop. Ernest Greene, a twentysomething based in Atlanta, helped foment chillwave with his initial releases as Washed Out — fuzzy, sample-based experiments, hardly the stuff of full albums.

Washed Out's beguiling LP debut, "Within and Without," defies expectations, however. Greene's '80s fixation remains but now in fully fleshed-out compositions imbued with lush atmospheres and gentle, soft-focus hooks. Despite the synthetic instrumentation, the songs teem with emotion, and it ultimately proves a triumph of substance over style.

— MATT DIEHL

