

## PORTASTATIC

### Who Loves The Sun: Original Film Score

(MERGE) [www.mergerecords.com](http://www.mergerecords.com)



In the annals of film composers one name you likely won't read about is Portastatic frontman and Merge Records founder Mac McCaughan. The New York-based musician and

former Superchunk singer is better known for his crunchy power chords than putting music to movies, but after people listen to *Who Loves The Sun*—an all instrumental soundtrack to a film with the same name—McCaughan's composing career might take off. This 22 song record is actually McCaughan's second soundtrack—in 2001 he scored the Canadian indie film *Looking for Leonard*—but this disc is by far the better of the two. The soundtrack is filled with soft, folksy melodies and several stunning oboe solos that are as catchy as Portastatic's best vocal lines. Other instruments such as piano, flute and violin flesh out otherwise straightforward pop songs, and provide a new dimension to Portastatic's work. Don't think of this album as an anomaly in the band's oeuvre—*Who Loves The Sun* might be their best album to date. **BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**

## SONIC YOUTH

### Rather Ripped

(Geffen) [www.geffen.com](http://www.geffen.com)

The Idle Stones just keep on rolling



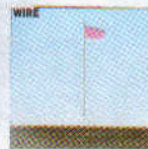
By rock and roll standards Sonic Youth should, after 23 years of making music, be releas-

ing watered down versions of their best work. It's happened to the best of them—just look at U2, the Beach Boys, even the Rolling Stones—but somehow the creative juices are still flowing in this legendary New York foursome. *Rather Ripped*, the band's 17th full length, has Sonic Youth writing some of their most memorable pop songs in over a decade—and maybe their entire career. "Reena," Kim Gordon's refreshingly simple four minute pop ditty, kicks off the album and the fun continues from there. But just because this is the most accessible Sonic Youth album since *Goo*, it doesn't mean they've lost their edge. "What A Waste" has plenty of noisy fuzz to please all those *Murray Street* fans and there's enough angst here to make even the oldest rocker feel like a teenager again. **BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**

## WIRE

### Pink Flag/Chairs Missing/154

(PINK FLAG) [www.pinkflag.com](http://www.pinkflag.com)



In 1977 kids everywhere were dialed into punk rock. The Clash just released their

first batch of politically charged tunes, while the Ramones were one record into their long, harmony-laden career. That same year a British band by the name of Wire released a commercially disastrous record full of short, aggressive rapid-fire tunes. Only savvy music fans expected it at the time, but Wire would become one of the most critically acclaimed art-rock bands of the '70s. Now, in an age where everyone can have an encyclopedic knowledge of music if they want to, Wire's time has finally come.

In March, the band's own label released *Pink Flag*, *Chairs Missing*, and *154*, Wire's first three and most revered albums. On the surface, their debut '77s *Pink Flag* is dirty, minimalist punk rock at its best. Five songs out of 21 are under one minute in length and gritty pop songs like "Three Girl Rhumba" sound as good as anything the Clash ever did. So why did Joe Strummer get all the attention? *Pink Flag* doesn't adhere to any set of rules—there are verses without choruses, yells without melodies and an odd sense of tension that casual punk fans might have trouble relating to. The other reason why they never entered punk's commercial pantheon is that on their second record, '78s *Chairs Missing*, the group stopped playing punk. Instead they focused their attention on creating ambient noises à la Brian Eno, experimenting with keyboards

and writing two and a half minute songs. Their last disc in this triumvirate was *154*, a spacey, dramatic album that falls more in line with the Cure than anything else. Despite Wire's experimentation, both of the latter albums have some classic pop tracks. *Chairs Missing*'s "Outdoor Miner" is a perfectly crafted, hook-filled two-minute number, while *154*'s haunting "A Touching Display" is one of new wave's most underrated moments. Almost 30 years on, Wire probably won't make a significant dent on the sales charts, but their ingenuity, passion and talent will have critics praising them all over again. **BRYAN BORZYKOWSKI**