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**albumreview**

**Sondre Lerche**  
Dan In Real Life *Original Soundtrack*  
Virgin Records

ELIZABETH VAIL  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

It's not a frequent occurrence to review a film's official soundtrack. In most cases, what's there to review? Does the reviewer comment on whether the filmmakers made a good choice in including Sir Mix-a-lot's "Baby Got Back" in a movie about fatal anorexia? Deride the maudlin use of the string section in John Williams' signature orchestration during the scene where little Timmy

gets thrown down a well?

Well in this case, the situation is a little different. The original soundtrack for *Dan In Real Life*, Steve Carell's newest comedy, is actually a compilation of eleven new songs by guitarist Sondre Lerche, his cover of Pete Townsend's "Let My Love Open the Door," A Fine Frenzy's version of "Fever," three songs from Lerche's previous albums, and

a hidden track of Dane Cook and the cast singing something classy called "Ruthie Pigface Draper."

Seen as a Sondre Lerche album in itself, *Dan In Real Life* is a sunny compilation of upbeat, jazzy string songs accompanied by Lerche's semi-falsetto, particularly the ebullient "To Be Surprised" and the low-key "My Hands Are Shaking." A Fine Frenzy performs a sweet, if somewhat sullen, cover of Peggy Lee's "Fever." And even the hidden track, ("Ruthie Pigface Draper,") is a surprisingly catchy piano-rock ditty about a woman with certain attractive, pig-like qualities.

If the film is anywhere near as warm, joyful, and addictive as Sondre Lerche's soundtrack is, Steve Carell just might have another blockbuster on his hands.

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**albumreview**

**The Kin**  
*Rise and Fall*  
Rykodisc

SEAN STEELS  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Those closely following the small corner of the music industry that's made up of airy, post-pop electronica/folk fusion have been impatiently awaiting The Kin's new record. The Australian brother duo let fly 14 tunes of sappy introspection on their newest release, *Rise and Fall*.

Their fourth studio album is full of the same romantic heft and serene orchestration that has endeared them to scenesters at large since their 2001 debut on the New York bar scene.

Subtle but intricate guitar work, somber inflections of ghostly reverb, and arcing vocal melodies make up the album's successful artistic flourishes. The brothers weave their rich voices into dulcet—but masculine—harmonies, and these down-to-earth, authentic vocal stylings paint an impression of humble, folkie musicians, who want nothing more than to play their tunes to whomever will listen.

Despite *Rise and Fall's* stylistic consistency, it runs the danger of being

overly conventional. The brothers flit through the already well travelled territory of clichéd love songs; their barely-above-average poetry just isn't enough to distinguish them from other pop groups playing the same tired chord patterns. In fact, this general atmosphere of mediocrity pervades the album. The content and expression feels tentative and excessively cautious, especially for a band with an upswing in popularity spurring on their fourth release.

The Kin have said they prefer to let their music be a blank canvas onto which others can create what they will, but their lack of statement and nagging ambiguity are holding back their songs. Nothing sounds distinctly bad, but there's nothing groundbreaking or innovative to speak of either. Chalk one up in the precisely satisfactory release column.



**albumreview**

**Brian Byrne**  
*Tailor Made*  
Kindling Music

MARIA KOTOVYCH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Who among us hasn't taken a road trip with music blasting and prairie roads stretching for miles ahead? Brian Byrne is now on a musical journey of his own: the former lead singer for the rock group I Mother Earth has now released his second solo album, *Tailor Made*. Departing from I Mother Earth's rock style, Byrne is now embracing country music, a style he grew up listening to. But rock feel isn't completely

absent from *Tailor Made*: he describes his style as "a mix of outlaw country and dirty southern rock."

"Tailor Made" links the two genres nicely—it's a catchy song that sounds like something Lonestar and Def Leppard might create if they ever jumped into a van and drove across the Prairies together. "Easy Come" is a laid-back, mid-tempo piece that could be played in a country bar somewhere

while locals two-step on the small, wooden dance floor. "Crazy" explodes with a fun and fast pace, with Byrne singing lyrics like "I know I'm drunker than I should be / But you just go straight to my head."

Despite its effective genre-melding, stylistic variety is definitely present in this album. Some songs, such as "Colder Than The Lake," harken explicitly to Byrne's rock past; the traditional country melodies of "The One, The Only (King of Late Night)" follow immediately, creating a pleasing contrast of genres. "Love You More," a slow country ballad, changes the pace quite effectively following those two faster tunes.

Byrne expresses a sweet and honest love in this piece; this song concludes the album—and Byrne's musical journey—on a delightful note.



**albumreview**

**Athlete**  
*Beyond the Neighbourhood*  
Parlophone

KRISTINA DE GUZMAN  
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Perhaps even the savviest of music fans here in Canada have never heard of Athlete, but apparently, these guys enjoy some popularity in the UK. After hearing *Beyond the Neighbourhood*, it seems baffling that Athlete hasn't gained the same international popularity as other UK bands like Snow Patrol and Coldplay.

That's not to say that they share that sound—although all three have similar approaches to songwriting—but they're all good bands, and they could be better if only they would move

beyond their established styles.

Despite having produced *Beyond the Neighbourhood* by themselves, it sounds like it was done by a professional. The opening track, "In Between 2 States," is an instrumental that sounds like U2 gone electronica, and "Airport Disco" is a futuristic dream in which travel by plane has been banned, but instead of airports being demolished, airports are converted into nightclubs.

Sadly, this song isn't nearly as intriguing as its concept, hindered by a repetitive pattern, but its intro and

ending are worth listening to.

With the exception of the first track, no song on this record is enticing from beginning to end. "It's Not Your Fault" is fairly tedious until its last minute, where vocalist Joel Pott energetically belts out "Oh! My! God!" over "What the hell just happened here?" My thoughts exactly—the song just got ten times better!

The highlight of *Beyond the Neighbourhood* is "The Outsiders," containing an ending that mixes piano, violin, claps, and scratchy effects almost redeems the whole album. The irony of this self-produced record's professional sound, however, becomes apparent when the catchy song hooks are overshadowed by monotonous and predictable song structures, as well as Pott's vocals, which for the most part stay within their comfort zones and rarely venture out to try something new.

In other words: over-produced.

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