



**FADED GLORYVILLE**

LINDI ORTEGA  
Last Gang Records

Toronto's Lindi Ortega constantly gets thrown under the "roots" banner. Classic country crooner would be a more apt descriptor for this perennial Polar Award contender. Ortega's sound and themes will be familiar to any fan of '50s and '60s country artists such as Kitty Wells and Loretta Lynn.

On her fourth album, *Faded Gloryville*, Ortega proves once again that she is a fantastic songwriter. Whether they are about men who leave for no good reason ("Ashes") or a life that just hasn't worked out as planned ("Faded Gloryville"), Ortega's songs draw in the listener with recognizable situations and ear-catching melodies.

A mix of ballads, crooners and up-tempo twangers, *Faded Gloryville* is a great introduction to the variety of styles found in classic country. On one of the end of the spectrum there's the plaintive, Patsy Cline-esque "Tell It Like It Is." On the other, there's the cheeky two-stepper "Run-down Neighbourhood," which suggests: "You can have some of my weed/ If I can smoke your cigarette/ I may be running low/ But I ain't out just yet."

Whether you're looking for a soundtrack for a crappy breakup, or just something to remind you of the night you spent at that honky-tonk, this is the album. *Faded Gloryville*—it's a place we should all plan on visiting.



**FROM FAR AWAY**

KINNIE STARR  
Aporia

Kinnie Starr has never been more in command than she

is on *From Far Away*. On her seventh album, Starr takes the reigns. The Juno-winning artist wrote, produced, engineered and recorded—and played every instrument—on this intimate album that integrates hip-hop beats with single-songwriter acoustic simplicity.

*From Far Away* successfully brings together all aspects of Starr's music to create the finest album of her more than 20-year career. Unlike her previous albums, *From Far Away* features a couple of possible singles, including the danceable—yes, danceable—"First Time" and "It'll Be Fine," with its hypnotic hopeful refrain. The rest of the album is more eclectic and more political. "Ladies in the Street" addresses the intricacies of female sexuality and suggests that guys "Turn off your porno screen and get some real loving."

Born to a Caucasian mother and a First Nations father, Starr is a passionate voice for Aboriginal rights. She celebrates her politics in songs like "Save the Waters," which asks, "Who will save the waters for our great-granddaughters?" With a bridge consisting of a rap about environmental destruction, this song successful marries music with message. This message of Aboriginal potential for changing the world is reiterated on the album's liner notes, where Starr asks that "indigenous people everywhere, especially mixed-race people, step forward as indigenous community members—strength in numbers!"

The other big message conveyed by *From Far Away* is that an artist can



take control of her career and create something uniquely her own. Well worth a listen.

**MIDNIGHT**

GRACE POTTER  
Hollywood Records

For the past decade, Grace Potter has led the roots-soul band Grace Potter and The Nocturnals (GP&TN). In that time, the Vermont-based band has released five critically acclaimed albums. The core of the band's success has always been Potter's incredible voice.

Potter possesses a vocal agility that allows her to take on material as diverse as The Band's sombre "The Weight" and Blondie's dance-floor favourite "Heart of Glass." She can make any song sound fresh, whether it's the latest GP&TN single or a '70s chart-topper.

Potter has just released *Midnight*, her first solo album. The funky soul that's been a hallmark of the GP&TN is still evident here. However, when she lets it loose on songs like the first single, "Alive Tonight," her wide-open rock diva sound is reminiscent of another Grace—Jefferson Airplane's Grace Slick. You can hear the similarities in Potter's impressive rock howl, as featured on "Look What We've Become" and "Instigator."

GP&TN fans will love the album's ballads, such as the painful paean to an evaporating love affair, "Let You Go," and "Low," a desperate ode to urban isolation. In these quieter moments, Potter demonstrates a restraint—both vocally and lyrically—that supports these songs' simple and elegant arrangements.

With *Midnight*, Potter redefines herself as a serious pop-rock artist at the height of her powers. Recommended. ❁