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Hi guys-

Here's the top ten CD list for 2008.
You KNOW you want to read it.
Talk soon, love on ya, P

2008 Top Ten CD List
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2008 was a good year for weapons-grade metal, hormone-drooling MTV girl groups, emotional blackmail skyladiko, ambient space bliss, Greek pop and the Athens underground scene in general. Sexy, intelligent people who actually read my weekly column and not just say they read my column have been made aware of lots of fine CDs, mainstream concerts and and great local shows in the past months. This top ten list gives you my favorite releases of the year.

Ten: *Kalomira: Secret Combination: The Album*. It's a shame that Kalomira split the scene after her heroic show at this year's Eurovision song contest. Bad management and some personal difficulties should not have stood in the way of her career advancement. The CD is, once again, straight-up FM pop, but she has drastically improved as a singer over the last few years. Her voice is not the ultra-sonic, high-end, temporal lobe puncturing nail gun that it was on her first CD. With proper touring and airplay *Secret Combination: The Album* could have easily equalled the success of her debut CD, *Kalomira*, which went to the number one chart position in both Greece and Cyprus. All tracks are beautifully produced pop nuggets and the highlight, "Fall to You," is a touching, impressive ballad that should have taken her from being culturally pigeon-holed as a gringo, mini-skirted bird-brain to a legitimate performer. We'll see what happens with her in 2009.

Nine: *Interstellar Overdrive: Hibernation*. Local ambient group Interstellar Overdrive is an undiscovered gem that released their first CD on Studio 2 Records this Fall. Their style ranges from Brian Eno's *Another Green World* and *Apollo* creative periods to arty, chill-out stuff that is simultaneously relaxing and thought-provoking. Super-clean recording and mastering make this a fine disc to play on any stereo set: From dorm-room boom-box to Bang and Olufson audio-porn dream machines, it is a digitally recorded audiophile treat. Excellent work for local guys. Really impressive stuff.

Eight: *Anastacia: Heavy Rotation*: I adore Anastacia. She's an unrepentant, sexy, uptown, red-hot mama in her middle years who's enjoying every nanosecond of her eye-popping, jaw-busting sexuality. Vocally, she cannot be topped. She's a perfect synthesis of classic Patti LaBelle with generous amounts of 60s-70s Aretha Franklin thrown into the mix for good measure. Her chart song, "I Can Feel You" is undoubtedly the most seductive, lush, and flat-out erotic dance track that has been released this year. The entire CD simply oozes smouldering, seasoned female passion and good times. The best party album of the year, bar none.

Seven: AC/DC: *Black Ice*: The greatest riff-rock band in history. Their first studio record in eight years is remarkably good considering they've been playing in exactly the same style since 1974. The are, indeed, The Rolling Stones of metal and deserve every accolade possible for their musical oeuvre, which is now in its fourth decade.

Remarkably clean recording, without giving-up a scintilla of rib-cracking punch; they still sound like inspired kids, but with the subconscious insouciance of Zen archers and sword masters. "Rock and Roll Train" is an anthem worthy of all their former arena rock classics and should be committed to memory by all aspiring young guitarists. AC/DC proves that there's hope for all of us and that age exists exclusively in the mind.

Six: Paola: *Perasame me Kokkino* (Greek Lyrics): A really fine bouzouki/skyladiko singer with a unique persona: The quiet, sexually repressed Ellinida who's on the verge of breaking her chain. There is always an underlying current of secrecy, desired rendezvous, and anticipated adultery in her presented material. At times her ovaries appear to be nearly incandescent with want for consummation. Most bouzoukia babes sing about the remarkable unfairness of life and just deal with the dilemma by swallowing their pride and continuing with the grind. Paola's byzantine mind appears to be looking for way of filtering through the cracks to find satisfaction. Remarkably, she has co-written two of the CDs best tracks. "Fige" - leave, and "Pos ma-feines na zo" -how can you leave me to live. She's not just a mechanical puppet with a good memory but a genuinely fine writer and performer. Her live show, when in the local skyladiko circuit, should not be missed.

Five: Metallica: *Death Magnetic*: Undoubtedly, the biggest seismic disturbance of the year. James Hetfield has greatly matured as a songwriter, incorporating any number of academic theories and ideas into his dark, brooding material. If they played any faster, they'd go back in time. If they played with any more complexity, their minds would explode into powder. However, they manage to harness themselves in long enough to create a masterpiece of brainy speed-metal that will go down in the history books as a musical icon.

Four: Sasa Basta: *Proth Fora* (First Time: Greek Lyrics) I may adore Anastacia, but I worship Sasa Basta. She's a high-visibility, national treasure, cheese-bomb who openly thumbs her nose at distractors who question her moral fiber. Her five-song maxi-single is the real thing when it comes to the Syngrou avenue, nightlife soundtrack. One can smell the stale cigarette smoke, knock-off cologne and questionable whisky simply pouring off of this CD. Some musical philistines may scoff at my placing Ms. Basta's work above that of global-superheroes, Metallica. I say Metallica themselves would unanimously and happily agree with me in my decision. Sasa, with her kilograms of blonde hair, hip-shaking craziness and overt sexuality is life itself. All the Metallicas can do is play their guitars and sing about it. Tell me I'm wrong.

Three: Sugababes: *Cat Fights and Spotlights*. The Pussycat Dolls aggressively bump and grind their way through their chart songs and videos. They're obviously built for speed. The Sugababes take their time and roll their hips and bodies with more soulful leisure. They're built for comfort and it's a really welcome change from the barrage of hard, jerky, jackhammer steps by the likes of Shakira, Beyonce and J-Lo. All Sugababes have a smoky, seductive persona that is playful, sophisticated and well polished. Their Motown and 60s soul influences are clear on tracks "Hanging on a Star" and "You on a Good Day." Savvy song construction, smart but sing-along lyrics, and great horn section fills make this CD an infinitely listenable winner.

Two: *Motown 50: Yesterday, Today, Forever* (Various Artists). 50 Years of inner-city jukeboxes come to life! Universal records took their October 2008 public opinion poll of the 50 greatest Motown hits and made a spiffy package from some quick holiday bucks.

Record companies who hold the rights to material from bands like KISS, Rolling Stones, Elvis, Beatles and Jimi Hendrix all ask themselves the same question every year. "How many times can you re-package and sell the same songs to people?" And invariably the answer is, "we don't know because we're still doing it." Compilation and live albums equal free money to record companies and artists, so why stop making them if people are occluded enough to keep buying them.

However, this is real quality stuff. It contains healthy amounts of the Supremes, Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder and Martha and the Vandellas. It has a bit too much Lionel Ritchie on it for my taste, but that's the only blemish on an otherwise nearly perfect compilation.

One: Motley Crue: *Saints of Los Angeles*. Their first release in ten years is pantheon material for the next generation of Les Paul slinging guitar heroes. Every note of every song, every brainwave of thought that went into the cds creation is the platonic form of real rock pathos. Breathtaking, sexy, fast and cool simultaneously, and grimy as a roadhouse in Larissa, Motley Crue delivers the quintessential ideological statement of rock: Sex and death are identical, so give me more, more, more! A classic. 26 stars out of a possible 10. Unbeatable. Absolutely.

So, dear reader, it has been my honor and privilege to report to you on the music scene each week this year. I sincerely thank you for your time and interest in my, occasionally effusive, screeds and hope you've received some pleasure from it. Stay tuned for piles of fun and many surprises from Sonic Boomtown in 2009. I wish you the greatest holidays ever and a really safe and pleasant new year. Love on ya, Perri from Athens News