



MUSIC

SHE'S GOT IT WOMEN WHO ROCK OUR WORLD

BY CHRIS COLLINGWOOD

ARE you tired of having to keep track of who's in Taylor Swift's posse? Don't have time to look up what Katy Perry just said about what's-her-face on Twitter? Hey, guess what? You don't have to! Clive Davis may not want you to know it, but there are plenty of amazing women having impressive careers in what's left of the music industry. This month we feature some of our favorite women you may not have heard of.

Brooklyn's **Big Thief** followed up their widely acclaimed 2016 debut *Masterpiece* in near-record speed with 2017's *Capacity*. Fronted by singer/guitarist/lyricist Adriaenne Lenker, Big Thief deliver raw, haunting songs that burrow deep and don't let go—thanks largely to Lenker's uncanny ability to tell a sad, sad story. Her frail vocals have a confessional quality and sometimes listening to Big Thief feels like eavesdropping on something dark, lovely, and forbidden.

The Dø are a French pop duo comprised of chanteuse Olivia Merilahti and multi-instrumentalist Dan Levy, who first met while working on a film soundtrack in 2005. Once a couple, the two have separated yet continue to make albums, thanks to modern technology that allows them to collaborate without actually having to be in the same room. What a world. Though their

first two albums sounded a lot like many other indie guitar bands, the new *Shake Shook Shaken* is almost all programmed. Normally I'm partial to natural instruments, but this album is exquisitely assembled and has moments of heartbreaking beauty.

Nicole Atkins released *Goodnight Rhonda Lee* this year, channeling personal turmoil and on-again, off-again sobriety into an instant retro soul classic. Stylistically miles away from 2014's meticulous electro-pop *Slow Phaser*, *Goodnight* was recorded live to tape using all the classic instrumentation of your favorite seventies vinyl albums—strings, horns, Nashville guitars, muted pianos, and drums. Anyone familiar with Atkins' spine-tingling powerhouse voice could have told you this is where she belongs.

Singer/songwriter **Tristen Gaspardrek**, or Tristen, released her fourth album in 2017, called *Sneaker Waves*. Tristen made a name for herself with quirky homemade tracks on the internet before releasing a full-length LP in 2011, the well-received *Charlatans at the Garden Gate*. *Sneaker Waves* is a thoughtful record, veering between melancholy guitar pop and more layered experimental keyboard numbers.

The New Orleans outfit **Tank and the Bangas** are difficult to describe—an

unlikely amalgam of rock, funk, hip-hop, spoken word, and soul that somehow manages to be all and none of those things. "Tank" is vocalist Tarriona Ball, who speaks, sings, philosophizes, and rhymes with conversational authority over a sputtering, playful ensemble in what might pass for the soundtrack of a very confusing Broadway musical.

While **Alyeska** take their name from an archaic spelling of "Alaska," singer/guitarist Alaska Reid came to Los Angeles not from the 49th state but from Montana. She and drummer Ben Spear must have made a kick-ass demo because somehow they got to record their debut EP, *Crush*, with legendary producer John Agnello (Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr., Kurt Vile). Reid's got a sensual delivery that calls to mind Rickie Lee Jones in 1979, if she were backed by layers of gigantic guitars and a walloping, airy drum kit. Find some good headphones and take in the space, because *Crush* is the last record to come out of NYC's famous Magic Shop. You can practically smell the amplifiers. ☺

Chris Collingwood is a singer, songwriter, and cofounder of the rock group Fountains of Wayne. His new band, Look Park, released their eponymous debut in 2016. Follow him @lookpark