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THE BEST ALBUMS OF 2023...SO FAR

EARLY CONTENDERS FOR ALBUM OF THE YEAR



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We can't believe we're saying this, but 2023 is half way done. Already giving us some of the most highly anticipated albums of the year alongside some surprises; the battle for album of the year is already savage.

Boiling down the best of the best to share the albums that have stayed on repeat at Gigwise HQ, here are our top albums of 2023... so far.

LIES - *Lies*

The self-titled debut from American Football bandmates and Midwest-emo pioneers Mike and Nate Kinsella was finally released back in March and it turned out to be every bit as magical as promised. Whilst maintaining the dark, emotional core and dreamy guitar passages for which American Football are known and loved, the cousins Kinsella have used the creative freedom granted by going under a different alias to further build out their sound and take it into interesting new places. With sweeping orchestral flourishes, lots of playful sonic experimentation and a noticeable but very welcome pop sheen to the production, it's an endlessly fascinating listen from the cult heroes. - Karl Blakesley

Top track: 'Resurrection'

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[Paramore - *This Is Why*](#)

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They've shed their skin a few times in their lifetime just to grow back a thicker one. On *This Is Why*, Paramore have taken the teeth and grit from 2009's *Brand New Eyes* and applied it to their present day sonic directness. Topics of nostalgia, toxic news and playing the bad guy in your own personal horror are present, when the role hasn't been taken already. - Emma Way

Top Track: 'You First'

Caroline Polachek - *Desire, I Want To Turn Into You*

Desire, I Want To Turn Into You sees Polachek at her most hedonistic. As the feverish title suggests, the album is a soaring, all-encompassing ode to *yearning*, in all its tangled ferality. Polachek experiments across genres, disregarding convention to play with everything from flamenco claps to glitchy breaks to create something both innovative and nostalgic, never underestimating the rich textures of its past. *Desire* is an intoxicating demand for more: more transformation, more hunger and more life. - Alice Browne

Top Track: 'Sunset'

Lana Del Rey - *Did You Know That There's A Tunnel under Ocean Blvd?*

Say what you want about Lana Del Rey and her tardiness, her attention to detail is always impeccable. And on her 9th studio album, the details and layers involved and intricate and stunning. Repeatedly referencing or sampling old sounds as she dips back into the pool of herself, this deeply personal album boils down all the best Lana has to offer from Hip Hip licks to rich, theatrical harmonies. With a crack team of collaborators and a tracklist that offers you a new favourite song with every listen, this album is undeniably her finest work yet. - Lucy Harbron

Top Track: 'Grandfather please stand on the shoulders of my father while he's deep-sea fishing'

Gorillaz - *Cracker Island*

With the highly anticipated return of Blur, Damon Albarn has already had quite the start to 2023. He kicked it off in February with the latest release from Gorillaz: *Cracker Island*. Unlike 2020's *Song Machine*, *Cracker Island* never outstays its welcome. The collaborations - which include artists as varied as Bad Bunny, Stevie Nicks and Tame Impala - compliment rather than overpower. A fun listen which moves in many directions, Albarn's pop project sounding as fresh, funky and worthy of celebration as it did two decades earlier. - Matthew McLister

Best song: 'New Gold (ft Tame Impala and Bootie Brown)'

King Krule - *Space Heavy*

Dreamy, stripped back and simply stunning, singing songwriter King Krule's fourth studio album *Space Heavy* is somewhat of a locational love letter. A homage to two cities he calls home, Archy Marshall encapsulates the landscapes of Liverpool and London through long winding soundscapes that in a blink of an eye transport you to the grey skies of a dreary UK seaside, before your back down your local having a pint with your mates reminiscing on old times, before snapping back into the reality of the present, something Archy battles throughout *Space Heavy*. Balancing new found fatherhood in the midst of the meaninglessness life it has to offer sometimes, *Space Heavy* sends you into a transfixed state of nostalgia for the good, the bad and the ugly. - Katie Conway Flood

Top Track: 'Pink Shell'

Shame - *Food For Worms*

Shame embarked on the difficult third album this year, and by all accounts, utterly smashed it out the park. *FFW* combines everything we know and love about Shame into a loud, thunderous LP. There are certainly punkier shades of *Songs of Praise* throughout, as well as some of the more nuanced and intriguing elements from *Drunk Tank Pink*. The four piece play with time signatures and quiet-loud dynamics with expertise, and demonstrate exponential musical progression. - Charlie Brock

Top track: 'Six Pack'

Baxter Dury - *I Thought I Was Better Than You*

Baxter Dury, son of Ian, takes on his artistic lineage in this fantastic record. Dury is far from the archetypal "nepo baby" and explores his life, schooling and upbringing with brutal honesty, as well as a nod and a wink throughout. Musically this record is stunning too, set to massive 808's and moody trip hop, Dury's drawl is expertly contrasted with fantastic female vocals throughout. - Charlie Brock

Top Track: 'Aylesbury Boy'

Tom Rasmussen - *Body Building*

Envisioned by Tom as an exploration of violence in three acts – escapism, reality and revenge – *Body Building* is a representation of trans joy, queer love, and defiance. Though a perfect slice of dance pop, *Body Building* doesn't confine itself to one genre and from electro to pop, Tom's experimentation and versatility sees them continually dive into the unknown – and it's totally enchanting. - Laura Dean

Top Track: 'Seth'

HMLTD - *The Worm*

Slagged off by Sports Team for “going to Goldsmiths” and having a fringe, HMLTD remain one the coolest bands to emerge from the 2018 south London scene. *The Worm* doesn't contest this. A whirling 41-minute-long prog-rock concept album that follows the story of a giant worm that's swallowed England whole and has left no one but vocalist Henry Spsychalski - or his alter ego, also named Henry - the power to defeat it, it's hilarious, absurd, strange, beautiful, harrowing and brilliant. Writhing from one unexpected direction to the next, *The Worm* is certainly one of the most interesting records to come out this year. It's absolutely batshit - and undeniably sick. - Tilly Foulkes

Top Track: 'Saddest Worm Ever'

Boygenius - *the record*

the record is a bizarrely intimate piece of work. Not unusual in the closeness given to us by Bridgers, Dacus and Baker, but strange in the way it feels like it's my private safe haven. And your private safe haven, and their private safe haven. It's more of a feeling and an all encompassing blanket of warmth than an album. *the record* is reliable, relatable and offers much more than the sum of its parts. The harmonies are transcendent, the lyrics are honest and they're open in their fakeness when they're lying. It's all so deeply personal in the way only a record not aiming for relatability can be. The trio trade places as lead at various times, giving us an array of experiences through a menagerie of sounds, voices and sculpted collaborations. No other record comes close to the record with the most obvious name. - David Roskin

Top Track: 'Not Strong Enough'

Blondshell - *Blondshell*

When you blow up on TikTok, there are a lot of eyes on you to impress. So often, what shoots up comes down pretty quick as artists are rushed through to a bigger, final project before they feel fully formed or up to the job. Blondshell defied all this. On her self-titled debut project, she traverses genres and topics with seasoned majority. From the effortlessly catchy lyricism of 'Sepsis' and 'Joiner', to the stripped back sadness of 'Sober Together' or 'Dangerous'; this deeply personal and thorough release immediately became an album of the year contender for me. And for song of the year? 'Salad' deserves to go down in history as one of the most powerful tracks ever penned about sexual assault and rape culture. It is a jaw-dropped, silencing song that carries as much power in your headphones as it does live. Bravo, Blondshell. - Lucy Harbron

Top Track: 'Salad'

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