

LOCAL LICKS

BY NATE SELTENRICH



Messenjah Selah

Breaking Babylon Curse

Born in Jamaica and based in San Leandro, Selah blends modern roots reggae with dancehall, dub, and rock. Light on the well-worn spiritual and social imagery of Rasta culture, he prefers to pair smart, serious commentary about contemporary issues with pure positive vibrations — especially throughout his sophomore album's superior second half. (Zion High Productions)

Magic Brook

The Source: Two Hands, One Guitar

True to his album title, Oakland's Magic Brook wrings a full range of sound from his acoustic six-string without turning to overdubs or accompaniment for melody, harmony, rhythm, or percussion. Through technical virtuosity and variable tunings, Brook proves himself unbound by genre and communicative with the listener both emotionally and intellectually. (Melusine Records)

Colossal Yes

Charlemagne's Big Thaw

Though likely not this Oakland band's preferred point of reference, similar vocal tones and a shared passion for upbeat piano-rock make comparisons to Ben Folds inescapable. Beyond that, Colossal Yes' sound is more outside and post-modern: flutes, harpsichord, and guitars (both buzzsaw and twanged-out) inhabit songs that are circuitous and unpredictable. (Ba Da Bing Records)

Jubala

Jubala

Jubala has roots in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, but embraces the latter with an earnest-as-hell and formulaic alternative rock sound that would struggle in the mainstream-wary Bay Area scene. Borrowing good and bad alike from popular groups like Muse, Incubus, and Dredg, this quintet is modern rock 'n' roll vanilla. (Exolution Entertainment) ●

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