



True Love

stitch-it kit



GETTING CRAFTY

When I was small, going to my grandmother's house always meant three things: tea and homemade shortbread, old photographs to look through, and embroidered linen guest towels in the bath room, set out just for me and my sister. My grandmother had made them herself, when she was about 10. I, alas, have no such skills, which is why I was thrilled when Jenny Hart's *Stitch-It Kit* (Chronicle Books) landed on my desk. Hart, a Texas-based artist (check out her work at jennyhart.net) has single-handedly made embroidery cool with her hand-worked portraits of Dolly Parton and Hank Williams. And now, you, too, can join the needlepoint revolution. The *Stitch-It Kit* includes everything you need to get started on the path to embroidered bliss, including two tea towels, embroidery floss, iron-on patterns, a needle, a hoop for holding your fabric taut, and an easy-to-follow instruction manual. Next month, I'll report on how I spent the Christmas holidays embroidering everything in sight.

NANCY MACDONELL SMITH

WILLY MASON

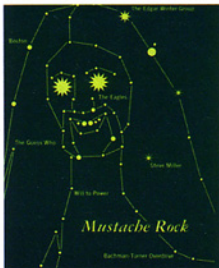
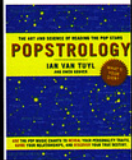
Where The Humans Eat
(Team Love)

Nineteen-year-old Willy Mason's first full-length album *Where The Humans Eat* is primarily a one-take compilation of heartfelt rumbles and gentle howls overlaid with fuzz pedal effects, cello, accordion and vibraphone that openly embraces mistakes. "Listening back," Mason says in the liner notes, "sometimes the wrong notes are the best parts of the song, and the imperfections are what keeps it spontaneous and live feeling." Indeed it does.

Inspired equally by Nirvana and Johnny Cash, in addition to his musical parents (is mom is countryblues singer Jerimma James), the singer exudes an unapologetic maturity and confidence in his songwriting—on par, arguably, with lyrical mastermind Leonard Cohen and devotional folk-rocker Bruce Cockburn. His youthful exuberance makes itself known in "Gotta Keep Moving" and "Our Town"—which have energetic arrangements and spurts of rage reminiscent of Modest Mouse.

The sublime title track makes good use of a juxtaposition technique often employed to great effect by Nashville's irreverent Lambchop: emotional pain and yearning is embedded in a beautiful lullaby. Most impressive is "Oxygen," Mason's counter-culture anthem. In it, he sings about happiness, freedom, and love; he wants "to be cooler than TV" (he is) and wishes for us all to be "stronger than bombs." (Let's.)

JENNIFER LEONARD



BOOKMARK:

Popstrology
The Art and Science of Reading the Pop Stars

Every so often the cosmos reveal to an unlikely prophet an inspired belief system that sweeps aside the established order, replacing it with a model for the new age. For our generation, that prophet is Ian Van Tuyl. In *Popstrology* (Bloomsbury), Van Tuyl directs us away from antiquated astrology, toward the stars that really shape our lives: pop stars. Based on the record that was #1 in the charts at the time of your birth, *Popstrology* helps you answer all those perplexing questions about who you are and why your life is such a mess. That tendency of yours to smother your partner with love until the relationship asphyxiates? Blame it on the bathetic amorous pleadings of your Birthstar, Air Supply. Prone to drug binges and promiscuous sex? One can't help but rebel against a Birthstar as bland as Bryan Adams. Often feel that your brilliance goes unrecognized by everyone but your mother? Hold onto that baseless faith in yourself. You were born under the influence of slow-rise mega pop sensation ABBA. So forget all that boring Scorpio / Aries stuff. Next time some old school loser asks, "Hey baby, what's your sign?"—smile cryptically, say "Bananarama," and flounce away.

KATHERINE KLUIZNIK

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Maybe This Christmas Tree
(Netwerk America)

If this third edition of the *Maybe This Christmas Tree* series doesn't put you the holiday spirit, you're a big green grinch. Every year, the good people at Netwerk America ask their favorite artists to cover their favorite holiday song or write an original seasonal tune. This time, the compilation is especially hip and diverse—featuring chorus-group-weirdos the Polyphonic Spree covering the optimistic "Happy Xmas (War is Over)," written by John Lennon and Yoko Ono, cool Danish duo the Raveonettes doing a feedback-drenched original composition ("The Christmas Song"), and indie sweethearts Death Cab For Cutie performing their best rendition of Phil Spector's "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)." Other jingle-bell rockers include Lisa Loeb, Pedro the Lion, Jars of Clay, and Royal Crown Revue. Even the cute cartoon sleeve, designed by Orange County artist Shag, will make you feel warm and fuzzy all over. Best of all, a portion of the proceeds benefits Toys for Tots—the U.S. Marine Corp charity that brings toys to underprivileged children—so every time you play it, you can pretend you're Kris Kringle. Available from netwerkamerica.com.

ABIGAIL BRULEY

