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Michael Giltz

Freelance writer and raconteur
Posted: February 22, 2010 03:27 PM

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The Best CDs of The 2000s

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Recently, I posted my list of [the best CDs of 2009](#). Now, after much agonizing and soul searching and countless soundchecks, I've finally produced my list of The Best CDs of the Decade. Needless, to say, this list will change again tomorrow and then again the day after that. I heartily enjoy arguing about which CDs are included, which are foolishly missing, which should be higher/lower/thrown in the dustbin. But most of all, I just hope it sends you off to listen to some great music. If you're a fan of the genre or the artist covered, chances are you'll find the music worth

a listen. Undoubtedly, you won't agree with every selection. But if you find enough in common with my tastes, take a chance on some of the CDs here that you haven't heard.

Note: I've generally been reluctant to list albums from 2009 because I haven't lived with them long enough yet, so check that list too. And no, I haven't included any descriptions or comments because this would become a novel if I tried to do so. Feel free to ask any questions about who is who or why certain artists are grouped together if it's not obvious. Most are obvious (pairings of albums of jazz standards of soul divas. Some are not. For example, I listed Ryan Adams and The Strokes together because they've both been disappointments. Both artists produced some of the best music of the decade and seemed poised to become world-beating artists and then failed to follow through (yet). And do tell me, what's your favorite album of the decade?

THE BEST CDS OF THE 2000S

1. **Sufjan Stevens**/ *Come On Feel The Illinois*
2. **The White Stripes**/ *Elephant* **Loretta Lynn**/ *Van Lear Rose* **Various Artists**/ *Cold Mountain* soundtrack
3. **Johnny Cash**/ *Unearthed*
4. **Various Artists**/ *A Soldier's Sad Story: Vietnam Through The Eyes Of Black America 1966-1973* and *Does Anybody Know I'm Here? Vietnam Through The Eyes Of Black America 1962-1972*

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5. **Ella Fitzgerald**/*Twelve Nights in Hollywood*
6. **Bob Dylan**/*Modern Times*
7. **Eminem**/*The Marshall Mathers LP*
8. **Amadou & Mariam**/*Dimanche a Bamako* and **Manu Chao**/*Proxima Estacion Esperanza*
9. **Ornette Coleman**/*Sound Grammar*
10. **Dixie Chicks**/*Home*
11. **Rufus Wainwright**/*Want One*
12. **Mavis Staples**/*Live: Hope At The Hideout* and **Various Artists**/*When Gospel Was Gospel*
13. **They Might Be Giants**/*Here Come The 123s* and *Here Come The ABCs and No!*
14. **Outkast**/*Stankonia*
15. **Kaiser Chiefs**/*Off With Their Heads* and **Arctic Monkeys**/*Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*
16. **Madeleine Peyroux**/*Careless Love*
17. **Orchestra Baobab**/*Specialist In All Styles* and *Made In Dakar*
18. **Ryan Adams**/*Gold* and **The Strokes**/*Is This It*
19. **Thelonius Monk Quartet with John Coltrane**/*At Carnegie Hall*
20. **Neil Diamond**/*12 Songs* and *Home Before Dark*
21. **Midlake**/*The Trials Of Van Occupanther* and **Fleet Foxes**/*Fleet Foxes* and **Bon Iver**/*For Emma, Forever Ago*
22. **Dolly Parton**/*Little Sparrow*
23. **Nas**/*Untitled*
24. **Youssou N'Dour**/*Nothing In Vain*
25. **Linda Thompson**/*Fashionably Late* and **Joan Baez**/*Day After Tomorrow*
26. **Terence Blanchard**/*A Tale Of God's Will*
27. **Norah Jones**/*Come Away With Me*
28. **Green Day**/*American Idiot*
29. **William Bolcom**/*Songs Of Innocence And Experience*
30. **Willie Nelson & Wynton Marsalis**/*Two Men With The Blues*
31. **Sharon Jones & The Dap-Kings**/*100 Days, 100 Nights* and **Amy Winehouse**/*Back To Black*
32. **Beck**/*Sea Change*
33. **Ali Farka Toure & Toumani Diabate**/*In The Heart Of The Moon*
34. **Cassandra Wilson**/*Thunderbird*
35. **Robert Plant & Alison Krauss**/*Raising Sand*
36. **Erykah Badu**/*New Amerykah: Part One (4th World War)*
37. **James Hunter**/*People Gonna Talk*
38. **Rosanne Cash**/*Black Cadillac*
39. **Bruce Springsteen**/*We Shall Overcome: The Seeger Sessions -- American Land Edition*
40. **Radiohead**/*In Rainbows* and **Jonny Greenwood**/*There Will Be Blood*
41. **Eels**/*Blinking Lights and Other Revelations*
42. **Boz Scaggs**/*But Beautiful* and **Joni Mitchell**/*Both Sides Now*
43. **Various Artists**/*Nigeria Special: Modern Highlife, Afro-Sounds & Nigerian Blues 1970-1976* and *Nigeria Disco Funk Special: The Sounds Of The Underground Lagos Dancefloor 1974-1979*
44. **Duncan Sheik**/*Phantom Moon* and **Various Artists**/*Spring Awakening*
45. **kd lang**/*Watershed* and **Al Green**/*Lay It Down*
46. **Wilco**/*Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*
47. **The Streets**/*A Grand Don't Come For Free*
48. **Tom Waits**/*Alice*
49. **Corinne Bailey Rae**/*Corinne Bailey Rae*
50. **Brian Wilson**/*Smile*
51. **Bettye LaVette**/*I've Got My Own Hell To Raise*
52. **Neil Young**/*Prairie Wind* and *Silver & Gold*
53. **Various Artists**/*Golden Afrique Vol 1-3*
54. **Bright Eyes**/*I'm Wide Awake It's Morning*
55. **Patty Griffin**/*Children Running Through*
56. **Teddy Thompson**/*A Piece Of What You Need*

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- 57. **Jay-Z**/*The Blueprint*
- 58. **Various Artists**/*One Kiss Can Lead To Another: Girl Group Sounds Lost & Found*
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- 60. **Nellie McKay**/*Normal As Blueberry Pie: A Tribute To Doris Day*

- 61. **Maxwell**/*BLACKsummers'night and Now*
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- 65. **Common**/*Be*
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- 67. **Solomon Burke**/*Nashville*
- 68. **Konono No 1**/*Congotronics*
- 69. **Carrie Underwood**/*Some Hearts*
- 70. **My Morning Jacket**/*It Still Moves* and **The National**/*Boxer*

- 71. **Steve Earle**/*Washington Square Serenade*
- 72. **Jill Scott**/*Beautifully Human: Words & Music Vol. 2* and **India.Arie**/*Testimony Vol. 1*
- 73. **Various Artists**/*The Roots Of Chica - Psychedelic Cumbias From Peru*
- 74. **Aimee Mann**/*Bachelor No. 2*
- 75. **Philip Glass**/*The Hours* soundtrack
- 76. **Kasey Chambers & Shane Nicholson**/*Rattlin' Bones*
- 77. **Regina Spektor**/*Begin To Hope*
- 78. **Tinariwen**/*Aman Iman: Water Is Life*
- 79. **Alicia Keys**/*The Diary Of Alicia Keys*
- 80. **Gorillaz**/*Demon Days*

- 81. **Elvis Costello with Allen Toussaint**/*The River In Reverse*
- 82. **Cat Power**/*The Greatest*
- 83. **Usher**/*Confessions* and **Coldplay**/*A Rush Of Blood To The Head*
- 84. **Tabu Ley Rochereau**/*The Voice Of Lightness*
- 85. **The Coral**/*Magic & Medicine*
- 86. **Joe Lovano**/*I'm All For You*
- 87. **Howard Tate**/*A Portrait Of Howard*
- 88. **Various Artists**/*A Light In The Piazza* cast album
- 89. **The Holmes Brothers**/*Simple Truths*
- 90. **Josh Rouse**/*1972 and Nashville*

- 91. **Various Artists**/*Goodbye, Babylon*
- 92. **M. Ward**/*Post War and Hold Time* and **Richard Swift**/*The Richard Swift Collection Vol. One*
- 93. **Sonny Rollins**/*The 9-11 Concert*
- 94. **Andy Palacio & The Garifuna Collective**/*Watina*
- 95. **Fountains Of Wayne**/*Welcome Interstate Managers*
- 96. **Various Artists**/*Avenue Q* cast album
- 97. **Josh Ritter**/*The Historical Conquests Of Josh Ritter*
- 98. **Café Tacuba**/*Cuatro Caminos*
- 99. **Super Furry Animals**/*Rings Around The World*
- 100. **Prefab Sprout**/*Steve McQueen* (2007 acoustic version)

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
keene 01:47 PM on 3/11/2010
35 Fans



KID A - over In Rainbows
and what about Fleet Foxes??

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sufi66 02:42 PM on 2/23/2010
276 Fans

Some good stuff, but very little great. The major artists are but a memory of their prime except Ella which is an actual recording from her prime.

How far we have tapered off from the seminal 60's.

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gelfring 05:02 PM on 2/23/2010
0 Fans

Its funny how people become so attached to an era (often that of their 20's). I myself am partial to the 90's. I'd pit OK Computer or Grace against virtually anything.

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sufi66 07:47 AM on 2/24/2010
276 Fans

It's not only attachment. Does the music endure? The evidence suggests, if I have to use such a dry term, that people STILL listen to 60's music, not because of nostalgia or youth or habit, but because of QUALITY: powerful words and music. Might as well well ask why classic books are still read after centuries of time.

Forty years from now if people are still listening to 1% of what's popular today, I would be very much surprised, but then I'll be dead in forty years so it probably will not matter much.....because I will have died before I got old.

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3ace 02:15 PM on 2/23/2010
10 Fans

A very respectable list. However, I'm surprised you didn't include the Black Keys at all. (Personal fave is 2003's Thickfreakness). One album to try, Seu Jorge's soundtrack to The Life Aquatic-acoustic Bowie covers in Portugese. Also, I would have to suggest Metallica's Death Magnetic.

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Michael Giltz 10:32 PM on 2/24/2010
59 Fans



The Life Aquatic soundtrack is indeed very charming. I will give Black Keys another listen; I know they've got critical acclaim. And Metallica is hard rock I respect but not dear to my heart. You can see I'm an old fogey sinking into Americana no matter how much I try to stay current.

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anonimost 11:35 AM on 2/23/2010

6 Fans

Coldplay: A Rush Of Blood To The Head (I know, I know, but it is good)

Monte Montgomery: At Work Play

Green Day: American Idiot

Jones: Come Away With Me

Beck: Sea Change

Andrea Bocelli: Toscano

John Mayer: Heavier Things

Andrew York: The Hauser Sessions

Annie Lennox: Bare

Bob Dylan: Love and Theft

Leonard Cohen : 10 New Songs

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER
Michael Giltz 10:34 PM on 2/24/2010
59 Fans



I was thisclose to including Coldplay. That is indeed by far the standout album of their career. I think I docked it points because of their body of work around it. Not fair, but there you are. I will definitely check out Andrew York. Leonard Cohen is on my best of the 70s and best of the 80s lists. Just didn't quite make the cut with that album, but il do love him.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER
Michael Giltz 02:43 AM on 2/27/2010
59 Fans



You've changed my mind and now I've added in Coldplay as well as the score to There Will Be Blood by Jonny Greenwood of Radiohead.

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HUFFPOST SUPER USER
RedDogBear 11:30 AM on 2/23/2010
302 Fans [Follow](#)



I don't think I could come up with ten best albums for the decade. There are a few I would add to yours though:

Chinese Democracy Guns 'N Roses. I know its not really GnR just Axl's latest band and it got a lot of press because it took forever to release and Axl is a jerk but if you get beyond all that and just listen I think its a great album. Buckethead is an amazing guitarist. I wouldn't say better or worse than Slash, when guitarists are that good I don't think you can really rate them, its pretty subjective. Like trying to argue if Clapton was better then Hendrix.

Neil Young. Greendale. I saw this live and almost walked out at the beginning. Neil had one of the most inane little rock u dramas enacted up on the stage. But then I just shut my eyes and listened. I think this is one of his best albums ever. Full of great songs that fit together and tell a story. He

repeats certain riffs and melodies, but IMHO nothing wrong with that.

Tegan and Sara: So Jealous and The Con. Twin sisters from Canada. I listened to them because I heard Neil Young liked them. Great alternative pop.

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Michael Giltz 10:36 PM on 2/24/2010
59 Fans



I'm a big fan of pastoral Neil Young, as you can see by the two albums of his I did include. Greendale is quite worthy but weighed down a tad by the hoo-haw concept surrounding the music. It deserves further evaluation with all that stripped away from it. Chinese Democracy is good but not quite all the way for me. Tegan & Sara are fun and I hope they continue to grow.

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3fingerbrown 07:21 AM on 2/23/2010

102 Fans



Hey, Michael, that's a ton of fine music. Makes me realize how much great stuff is still be recorded-- all those titles and still several of my faves from the decade didn't make the list. Here are a few:

Elephunk Black -Eyed Peas

Perpetual Motion -Bela Fleck

Don't Give Up on Me -Solomon Burke

Acoustic Soul -India.Arie

Bachelor No. 2 -Aimee Mann

O Brother, Where Art Thou? -Soundtrack

Waltz of a Ghetto Fly -Amp Fiddler

Los Fakires -Los Fakires

I Can't Stop -Al Green

Red Dirt Girl -Emmylou Harris

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 02:51 AM on 2/27/2010
59 Fans



That Aimee Mann album is on there, as is another album by Solomon Burke and India.arie. I went back and forth on all three of the Al Green albums about which one to include. I might have just listed all three but I felt I was pushing the doubling and tripling up as it was. Certainly all three of his albums are an amazing return to form. I just started getting into Bela Fleck's African album Throw Down Your Heart from 2009. I just didn't listen to it enough yet. I may very well put that in for 2009 and the decade once I've let it stand the test of time. I love Emmylou Harris and probably just didn't include her because she's all over earlier decades both solo and with Trio and Linda Ronstadt and the solid recent stuff hasn't quite pulled me away yet from her classic work. T Bone Burnett deserves his own category or award. And I look forward to checking out Los Fakires.

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gelfring 11:57 PM on 2/22/2010

0 Fans

not bad... but as with most, painfully missing a couple of albums... a quick top 9:

1. Opeth - Blackwater Park
2. Godspeed you Black Emperor - Lift your skinny fists like antennas to heaven
3. Radiohead - Kid A
4. White Stripes - Elephant

5. Mastodon - Blood mountain
6. Damien Rice - O
7. Bon Iver - For Emma forever ago
8. Ray Lamontagne - Trouble
9. Band of Horses - Everything all the time.

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 01:59 AM on 2/23/2010
59 Fans



Thanks for the list. Always more to check out like Godspeed You Black Emperor.... Like Ray Lamontagne. Just didn't quite make it. But I'm one of the sad people who wasn't slayed by Damien Rice's album though I certainly enjoy certain tracks and his live performances.

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DMohr 11:33 PM on 2/22/2010

123 Fans



Whoops! I meant to say, "even if I disagreed with the majority of your list, which I don't" - sorry!! :)

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HUFFPOST BLOGGER

Michael Giltz 02:00 AM on 2/23/2010
59 Fans



Ha! Well that makes it a much nicer comment, doesn't it? Thanks!

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DMohr 11:32 PM on 2/22/2010

123 Fans



Michael, even if I disagreed with the majority of your list, I take my hat off to your including Terence Blanchard's "A Tale of God's Will," which is based on the score to my favorite movie of the last decade, Spike Lee's Katrina documentary "When the Levees Broke".

Also, FYI, Rufus Wainwright re-released his excellent albums "Want One" and "Want Two" in a two-CD set, simply called "Want." It's available on Amazon.

My picks for the best albums of the past decade:

Favorite albums of decade:

1. & 2. (Tie) Radiohead - Kid A & In Rainbows
3. Juana Molina - Son
4. D'Angelo - Voodoo
5. The White Stripes - Elephant
6. Grizzly Bear - Yellow House
7. The Walkmen - You and Me
8. Madeleine Peyroux - Careless Love
9. Squarepusher - Ultravisitor
10. Holly Golightly - Truly She Is None Other

Runners-up: Sonic Youth - Murray Street, Rufus Wainwright - Poses and Want, Vampire Weekend - Vampire Weekend, PJ Harvey - Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea, Al Green - Lay It Down, Holly Golightly and the Brokeoffs - You Can't Buy a Gun When You're Crying, Devendra Banhart - Smokey Rolls Down Thunder Canyon, Jonny Greenwood - There Will Be Blood soundtrack, Andrew Bird - Armchair Apocrypha

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Michael Giltz 02:02 AM on 2/23/2010
59 Fans



Thanks for the list. I almost included the There Will Be Blood soundtrack but felt like I was pushing it with so much doubling and tripling up. But great great score/use of music. I just haven't been playing D'Angelo as much. Guess he faded from my mind as he faded from

scene. Gonna check out Juana Molina.

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lehi Aour 09:35 PM on 2/22/2010

66 Fans

Michael, I am questioning your jazz chops. I wonder if you are listening to David Murray, William Parker, Don Byron (Ivey Divey!!!), Dianne Reeves, Wayne Shorter, and the out to lunch bunch from the AACM in Chi-town? I could go on, Michael, likely for days, but I will stop here. I often run into Matthew Shipp (piano) and we talk about the state of things---stuff (despite your statement in your last blog) is happening.

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Michael Giltz 02:06 AM on 2/23/2010

59 Fans



You should question my chops in a lot of areas but jazz is certainly one where I am deficient. I do feel on firmer ground with vocalists. I almost fit in Reeves' soundtrack for Good Night and Good Luck. I'm sure good stuff is always happening; it just has to be revolutionary to reach the less savvy, casual fans like myself.

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lehi Aour 09:23 AM on 2/23/2010

66 Fans

Cool. Not bustin' chops, or anything, I am glad that you are keeping Ella in the forefront. That's a great place to start, or to return to.

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Mike Taylor 2 07:10 PM on 2/22/2010

11 Fans

If I were to be stranded on a deserted island with just this list of songs/ artists / albums on a solar-powered iPod, I'd probably bash my own head in with a coconut in the first sitting. I know music is subjective, but gimme a break!! Is this the "best" the Aughts brought to bear in music? Good Lord! DEATH TO THE "AUTOTUNE"!!!!

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Michael Giltz 07:53 PM on 2/22/2010

59 Fans



Huh? This is hardly a pop-heavy Auto-Tunes dominated list. But tell us some of your favorites so we know we're you're coming from or can get some ideas of good CDs to pick up.

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Scurvybro 04:13 PM on 2/22/2010

31 Fans

While I find Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings somewhat appealing, and I'm a huge fan of the neo-soul/funk/r&b genre, my favorite practitioners of it at the moment is Breakestra. Like the rest of the movement, Breakestra inherited its DNA from the late 1960s-'70s soul era. Compared to Sharon Jones & the Dap-Kings, Breakestra has a harder-edged, tougher sound.

Anyone who grew up with and liked the sounds of James Brown, Aretha Franklin, Sly and the Family Stone, War, Tower of Power and the Average White Band should check out Breakestra.

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Michael Giltz 07:51 PM on 2/22/2010
59 Fans



Thanks for the tip. I'll check 'em out.

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