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## The borrowers

### Clap Your Hands Say Yeah steal from the best

By S.J. Barlament

"So this is what David Byrne's doing with his time?"  
— nevermore, from The Daily Page Forum, [thedailypage.com](#)



**Clap Your Hands Say Yeah nods to the past.**

You'd be forgiven for thinking the self-titled debut album by Brooklyn-based Clap Your Hands Say Yeah is a bit derivative. It borrows liberally from early Talking Heads, classic U2, anti-folkie Roger Manning and New Order. But I defy you to find a better debut release from the last 12 months — by the second track, "Let the Cool Goddess Rust Away," you'll be turning up the volume and surrendering to the album's sheer summery power. And if you listen to just one more rock song this year, make it "The Skin of My Yellow Country Teeth." It'll satisfy any craving you've got, whether for quirky attitude, brilliant turns of phrase, stick-in-your-head-for-a-week hooks or straight-up rocking out.

With the past few years having seen breakouts from such throwbacks as the Strokes, the Hives, the White Stripes, the Killers, and on and on, CYHSY's rise to popularity is a sign of the times. But how many of those other bands have done it the way CYHSY have — by self-releasing a debut album that nods to the past without stealing from it? This is a group that synthesizes their many obvious influences into a piece of work that sparkles with adventure and promise.

Despite having released one of the most acclaimed debuts of the year, Clap Your Hands Say Yeah have yet to strike a record deal. If you want to be able to say "I saw 'em when," catch the band at the Annex on Sunday, Sept. 25, at 8 p.m.

Mates of State  
Thursday, Sept. 29, the Annex, 9 p.m.

I'm not a big fan of Mates of State, consisting of famously in-love married couple Kori Gardner and Jason Hammel. But those who do enjoy the band can get rather obsessive about it. There's something about Gardner and Hammel (or "Kor-Kor" and "Jaso," respectively, as the more fanatical refer to them) that makes people want to be near the happiness that seems to surround them wherever they go. And they've been getting a lot of great press over the past couple of years, too. Last year's *All Day* EP turned up on various "Best of 2004" lists, with the only universal complaint being that, at four songs, the disc left listeners wanting more.

To me, the EP's major flaw is that even its most interesting song, "Starman," doesn't add anything to the David Bowie original. Maybe I'm a "bad, cynical, awful person," as Will Welch described those incapable of appreciating the Mates in *Fader Magazine* earlier this year, but there's something about the MoS experience that I just don't get.

Maybe it's the lack of bass lines. The group's music, while undeniably peppy, lacks anything resembling a foundation. Drums and keyboards can only take you so far, which is why, I assume, *All Day* at least makes use of a few guitars here and there.

Mates of State play the Annex with Brooklyn-based folk-poppers Ida on Thursday, Sept. 29. However the show turns out, I'm pretty sure Kor-Kor and Jaso will walk out of the place feeling happy. From what I can tell, they always do.

## **Sigur Rós**

Friday, Sept. 23, Orpheum Theatre, 8 p.m.

"Otherworldly," "mysterious," and "undeniably affecting." "Incomprehensible," "haunting," "orchestral" and yet "strangely intimate." Then there's "gossamer-light," "richly layered" and the old standby, "strangely beautiful."

Those are some of the descriptions that have been thrown at Iceland's Sigur Rós, playing Sunday, Sept. 23, at a sold-out Orpheum Theatre. The press kit for the new *Takk...* (Geffen Records) features a quote by the band's Kjartan Sveinsson: "There is nothing clever about Sigur Rós and how we write songs, it's just mucking about really." Well, the world begs to differ.

Since bursting onto the international music scene with 1999's *Ágætis Byrjun*, Sigur Rós has made music appropriate for contemplation, be it about space, nature, love or life itself. And as for the "strangely beautiful" thing? I know someone who wanted to see the show this weekend just to watch the crowd. "I read somewhere that it never fails," he said. "At a Sigur Rós show, take a look around. You'll see people crying."

I can understand that. Even though their lyrics are mostly unintelligible, and in Icelandic when they're written in any real language at all, listening to a Sigur Rós album is akin to meditation: no real words to get caught up in, little if any typical rock bombast, and soaring (yet somehow still mellow) melodies. It's all but impossible to hear *Takk...*'s "Glôsôli" without feeling the surging power of the song's second half, regardless of what the thing's supposed to be about.

So what should you expect from the show if you're lucky enough to have tickets? Well, pretty much whatever you want. This is music stripped of meaning, and in concert the band even goes so far as to endorse the idea of fans making up their own lyrics to the songs.

Oh, and one more thing: If you're going to the show, don't forget to look around.

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