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Music **BEST OF 2009**



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Publicity photograph for Damon & Naomi for their album *The Sub Pop Years*, New York City, 1997. Photo: David Corio.

STEPHEN PRINA

- 1 **Louis Andriessen, *Workers Union*** (Ojai Music Festival at the Libbey Bowl, Ojai, CA) Beneath a canopy of stars, a small mixed ensemble begins a propulsive melody of fixed rhythm and approximate pitch. Gradually, more and more musicians come forward, until nearly everyone who's taken the stage all weekend joins in a thunderous culmination of the festival, forcefully drifting off into the moist California deep.
- 2 **Scott Benzel, *Blak Bloc for String Quartet and Feedback (Numero Deux)*** A pulse, the product of emphatic bowing, is the field across which small differences play out and weave about extended tones. When something like melody appears, an ascension counters an act of grounding in the bass to cleave a space down the center of this tenuous but ravishing body, making way for a wash of—a concerto for—feedback.
- 3 **Bonnie "Prince" Billy (aka Will Oldham) (Wilbur Theatre, Boston)** Oldham delivers the most captivating rock show I've cared to witness in, like, forever. Yes, his stadium-size gestures translate all the way to the back of the house, but he never jeopardizes the tender nuances by which he and his cohorts give shape to the rude indelicacies and circumspection of modern lives.
- 4 **Damon & Naomi, *The Sub Pop Years (20/20/20)*** Intimacy: These liltingly guileless tracks are a testament to the rapport that two people may achieve over time with their audience. Manufactured intimacy: A "studio" version of the album *Live in San Sebastian*, overlaid with applause lifted from a live-show bootleg, does nothing to mitigate this aforementioned affect. Miraculous.
- 5 **David Grubbs, *An Optimist Notes the Dusk*** (Drag City) Tracing an arc from through-composed

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