Music Reviews

Kveikur

Jane Gardam's 'Last Friends'

Kveikur has already made much of the "sweeping" step they've taken on ' Promise; their seventh studio album and the second in the space of a year. From the first track and single, Brevenstein, until the last, this is a lot more punchy, pounding and personal than anything from the trio before. But this is Big Ben, whose music remains beautiful - they haven't become Rammstein overnight.

Echining falsetto vocals, exploratory waves of synths, dainty jingles and tender strings still stop listeners dead in their tracks.

THE GATEWAY

Last Friends

Jane Gardam's 'Last Friends'

Last Friends completes Jane Gardam's 'Old Fats' trilogy, focusing on the trio of Old Fats, Betty and Veneerling. Last Friends sees Veneerling finally take centre stage, as Old Fats did in 2004's Old Fats', and Betty died in 2009's The Man In The Wooden Hat. As with all Gardam's characters, Veneerling has an unconventional past.

The reader is taken back to 1977 to visit his humble beginnings in the Northern town of Herrington. This is a romantic, yet brilliantly realistic end to a tale about three friends who have been through it all together.

THE GATEWAY

Apple Tree Yard

Apple Tree Yard

Apple Tree Yard appears to have it all: a successful career in genetics and a large home in London, which she shares with her husband, with fleeting visits from her upstate parents. She didn't plan the affair, though her marriage wasn't far from it anyway, it was just chance she stumbled across him as an opportune moment. The novel follows the affair - effect of the choices she makes as she spirals out of control. Apple Tree Yard reads not only a look at the individual psychology of humans, but the social choices that morally we live by.

OUR RATING:

8 out of 10

THE GATEWAY

Happy Money

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As an antidote to the plethora of books promising to make you thin in a month, Happy Money takes a different approach to fitness. Rather than telling you how to make more money, the author explains how to use the money you do have to make you happier. Because actually, after a certain point more money doesn't make you happier. The book essentially gives five rules to live by - buy experiences, keep treats as treats, buy time, spend money on others and pay now, receive later. Jim-packed with tips, it's also really funny.

OUR RATING:

9 out of 10

THE GATEWAY

Ice On The Dune

Ice On The Dune

Born Sinner

J. Cole

Graffiti-announced rapper J. Cole pushes the follow-up to his 2011 debut Cole World: The Sideline Story to coincide with Kanye West's Yeetus, out the same week. Far from the basketball theme on his previous album, the North Carolina-based star, full name Jermaine Lamarr Cole, wears t-shirts in the opening: "We way darker than the moon. The record, interspersed with short skits, features collaborations with Miguel, TLC and Kendrick Lamar and is largely a great listen. It's good to hear a fresh talent who can throw out rhymes.

OUR RATING:

7 out of 10

THE GATEWAY

Garyn G

Garyn G

Company of Heroes 2

The original Company of Heroes thrust you into the Brenig Private Ryan scenario, and went on to deliver one of the most visceral real-time strategy experiences on any gaming system. Now, you take command of the iconic Soviet Red Army in brutal frontline warfare to free Mother Russia from the invading Nazis, while Company of Heroes 2 takes on the very best RTT has to offer. Can it deliver a brilliant wartime adventure, as you stretch your strategic skills and tactical expertise to the limit, beautiful and brutul.

OUR RATING:

8 out of 10

THE GATEWAY