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PLAYLIST

From Kingston's Streets to the Wide-Open Spaces

By JON PARELES

Terry Lynn

Stark, merciless electronic beats and noises ricochet like gunshots around Terry Lynn on her debut album, "Kingstonlogic 2.0" (Last Gang). Her vision of her hometown, Kingston, Jamaica, has little in common with the raunch and swagger of typical dancehall, and her sound is even more skeletal: chants, buzzes, thuds and zaps, only occasionally making way for a chord or a shard of melody.

She sees murder everywhere, with people caught between gangsters marking territory and equally trigger-happy policemen enforcing curfew. "Chop it bash it smash it scrape it," she rhymes in "Kingstonlogic." "Try you may but can't escape it." She also sees larger forces at work, and by the end of the album she's praying, but she is most riveting at street level. There's a sampler at kingstonlogic.com.

Calexico

Calexico, from Tucson, arrives as multiple bands on its new album, "Carried to Dust" (Quarterstick), a collection of enigmatic songs about wanderings and disappearances. Sometimes Calexico is a Southwestern Dire Straits, with Joey Burns whispering over loping, subdued guitar vamps as John Convertino plays his drums with brushes. Or it's a band looking toward Mexico, with mariachi horns and impassioned singing (by guests) in Spanish. Or it's a spaghetti-western soundtrack orchestra with guitar reverb and, on one song, whistling. At its best, in songs like "Victor Jara's Hands," it's all of them at once, eerie and poetic as it straddles more than one border.

Slipknot

The horror-movie-masked nine-man Iowa metal band Slipknot used to just thrash away on its drums, guitars and junk percussion while Corey Taylor barked the grim tidings of its lyrics, a spew of apocalypse, self-loathing, apostasy and personal and political fury. Slipknot's fourth album, "All Hope Is Gone" (Roadrunner), still does some of that. But in his other band, Stone Sour, and now with Slipknot, Mr. Taylor has revealed that he can carry a tune. On "All Hope Is Gone," Slipknot stops pummeling every now and then for a few lines of melodic chorus, a full-length dirge, even a power ballad that's a sort of spurned love song. The more melody, the more derivative the songs become; that dirge, "Gehenna," might as well be a Nine Inch Nails outtake. But this is how a thrash band moves from a cult following to a radio audience. Just ask Metallica.

LL Cool J

Is LL Cool J, who released his first 12-inch single back in 1984, "a relic from some long-forgotten game"? That question obsesses him on "Exit 13," his last album for the Def Jam label. Between movie and television