

compiled by Aelred Doyle

lady antebellum

Lady Antebellum / Capitol / 2008

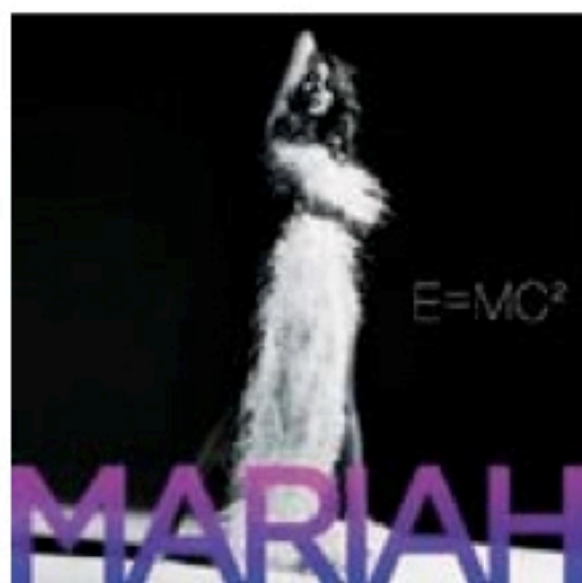
★★☆☆☆

That Lady Antebellum's self-titled debut album has landed is good news for those whose favorite emotion is 'blah': the first track, "Love Don't Live Here Anymore", is an oddly upbeat song devoid of the feelings of loss or defiance the title suggests – never mind the accusing anguish of the Rose Royce classic of the same name. After that, the album descends into a male-female duet thing which is just plain weird. Hillary Scott and Charles Kelley alternately sing lead vocals and backing harmonies every couple of bars, with the result that it's hard to tell what the connection between the singers is meant to be. Are they lovers singing to each other? Brother and sister? Two strangers singing identical



lyrics into the same microphone by chance? Look out for "All We'd Ever Need" in a teen angst movie near you, probably in a flashback scene after the hot quarterback dies. This is the song his two-timing-but-penitent cheerleader girlfriend, while brushing her golden tresses and staring soulfully in the mirror, will reminisce to as she gets ready for the funeral. Yeah. The 'best' tracks – "I Run to You", "Love's Lookin' Good on You", "Slow Down Sister" – feature catchy hooks. Sing along and practice your twang. Worst tracks: all the rest. We just don't get it. ■

Iris Jay



e=mc2

Mariah Carey / Island / 2008

★★☆☆☆

Here's a question that football fans are sometimes wont to pose: if you wanted an alien to understand the beauty of the sport, which team would you have them watch? The same question can be applied to music. But if aliens do land tomorrow, and you're the one elected to explain music, don't use $E=MC^2$. Unless to you music = contrived, over-produced tunes, minus pathos, to the power of vacant. We've heard this same record from 'Mimi' before. Collaboratively

promiscuous? Check. Peppered with tired ballads? Check. Devoid of live instrumentation? Check. Key words spelt out to negate the need for lyrical innovation? "Cee are you eye ess ee control". Check. The album opens with lexically loose "Migrate", in which the first note is a trademark high-pitched screech. Then comes "Touch My Body". Moral of the story: don't release our sex tape online or "I will hunt you down". On first listen, we thought "Side Effects" might be about date rape and Rohypnol. It isn't. It's about emotional abuse and summoning up the courage to escape from a bad situation. It's the one track that feels remotely autobiographical, where she sings about something people can universally relate to. The album's not awful. It's Mariah. If you're a fan – dig in. If not, this record won't convert you. ■

Iris Jay