



## EDITOR'S PICK

**The Turn, Alison Moyet (Decca):** Back in the '80s, there was no band cooler than Yaz, the British duo featuring Alison Moyet and bandmate Vince Clark, who later formed Erasure. The pair virtually reinvented the new wave dance music scene in 1982. Now Moyet, whose award-winning voice is still enthralling, is back with a Yaz reunion tour and this new solo album. The former soul-punk princess is all grown up but is still emotionally compelling and full of youthful abandon. Her soul-pop-French balladeer style will captivate both old-school fans and those who love contemporary women's music. Even better, Mute Records also celebrated the reunion of Yaz by releasing *In Your Room*, a four-disc box set of studio albums, B-sides and rarities. ([alisonmoyet.com](http://alisonmoyet.com)) — Diane Anderson-Minshall

# Career Queers

Dyke singer-songwriters with staying power. | By Margaret Coble



Amy Ray gets introspective

It's rare to find artists who can carve out a lifelong career in the music industry while being openly queer, but this month's featured singer-songwriters have all done just that. Listening to these albums by Amy Ray, Kaia Wilson and Ferron is like getting together with old friends.

**Didn't It Feel Kinder, Amy Ray (Daemon Records):**

On this, her third solo studio venture away from the Indigo Girls, Ray spreads her wings a bit, musically and lyrically, and offers one of her most compelling albums yet. Working with a producer (Greg Griffith) for the first time, Ray explores a wide range of sounds and styles, with contributors like Melissa York (the Butchies, Ex-Members), Kaia Wilson (the Butchies, Team Dresch), Brandi Carlile, Tomi Martin (Three5Human) and the band Arizona. Like her previous albums, *Stag* and *Prom*, it's an intimate set, but Ray pushes herself even further, emotionally and vocally, on introspective cuts like "She's Got to Be," with its smoldering soul-blues twang and her evocative falsetto delivery. While musically bridging the gap between pop, punk and hip-hop, "Bus Bus" is a sweet, danceable love letter offering a behind-the-scenes glimpse at her life on the road. Some cuts go a more political route, like "Who Sold the Gun," with its references to the Virginia Tech massacre and its ponderings on our violent society, while "SLC Radio" describes a tour stop in a religiously conservative area, where Ray reached out of her comfort zone to connect with the kids of the "LDS nation." But the opening song, the soaring "Birds of a Feather," probably best sums up what this album, Ray and her career have been about, asking: "If we are birds of a feather, why can't we migrate?/...Why can't we fly in formation or just be friends on the way?" This disc is Amy Ray in her prime. ([amy-ray.com](http://amy-ray.com))

**Godmakesmonkeys, Kaia Wilson (Jealous Butcher Records):**

It's been a while since we've heard from Kaia Wilson. This fourth solo album has been anticipated since the Butchies went on hiatus back in 2005, but it was well worth the wait. The confessional lyrics and sparse instrumentation of her previous solo discs, *Kaia* and *Oregon*, can be found again here, ranging from acoustic pop songs and country ballads to indie-folk tunes and atmospheric anthems. The 40-minute, 14-track album is largely filled with love songs, "some of them with undertones of loss and grief, the mixture of excitement and guardedness we have when falling in love...whatever that really means," says Wilson. Highlights include the twangy roadtrip sing-along "Dogs/

Trucks," the harmonica-filled epic "Montana," and the catchy vocals of "I Got You," with its poignant lyrics and breathy delivery. There's even a tender instrumental to close out the set ("Get the Ball Snackie!"), and Butchies fans will recognize "Everything/Everywhere" from *Make Yr Life*, albeit in a stripped-down, abbreviated form. The CD also comes with a coupon for a free download of the bonus album *I Think I'm Alone Now*, containing a career-spanning retrospective of demos, outtakes, compilation tracks, covers and "potentially embarrassing moments." This is Kaia doing what she does best. Dive in. ([kaiawilson.com](http://kaiawilson.com))

**Boulder, Ferron (Short Story Records):**

Produced by Bitch, this 12-track album is the outgrowth of the recent collaboration between these two women's music stars of different generations, and is the debut release on Bitch's new indie label. Canadian folk legend Ferron is a songwriting treasure, and this set extends her legacy to 14 albums of Dylan-esque wordsmithing and intricate guitar picking. With contributions by the all-stars of the contemporary women's music scene, including Ani DiFranco, the Indigo Girls, Samantha Parton of the Be Good Tanyas, Le Tigre's JD Samson, Ulali's Jennifer Kreisberg and Soni Moreno, Lyndell Montgomery and the ever-present Julie Wolf, *Boulder* mines 11 of Ferron's finest previously released songs plus a new cover of Bitch's "Highway." Longtime fans will appreciate innovative interpretations of favorites like "Misty Mountain," and the soulful, electronic co-production of Samson on "In the Meantime," while other chestnuts get more traditional full-band treatments. Recorded by Bitch in her RV studio on a laptop, with one microphone, this disc is a beautiful gathering of our collective tribe that does Ferron justice as not just an elder but also a genius, worthy of our respect. ([ferrononline.com](http://ferrononline.com)) ■