



**PJ Olsson**  
**Words for Living**  
**(Columbia)**

On his major-label debut, *Words for Living*, PJ Olsson dives head-first into his techno-folk concoction with no warning whatsoever. And it's a while before he comes up for air, as he submerges himself in electronics, acoustics and layer upon layer of vocals, where subtlety doesn't count as a virtue. Musically adventurous and lyrically bold, Olsson makes such lines as "Held up my marijuana / If you think it's a crime

/ I'll take a piss on your grave" and "The ozone, like a clit / Dripping sunshine on my lips" sound normal. Both beauties come from the album's first single, "Visine," in which Olsson offers another hilarious image: "Hauling out of Moscow on a jellybean with wheels."

When he's on, the words work. When he's off, watch out. As another PJ we know and love ruined a good song with her "little fish, big fish" bullshit, Olsson blows "Dandelion" with a ridiculous "I'm the dandy-lion...float float away" chorus. Being baked can't even save it. In "Thorazine," crap like "I think I'm gay / I think it's all right / I think it's all right 'cause I think I'm gay" is redeemed by "Love is my Thorazine / Lithium hell and hand cream," but only barely.

The true gems, though, don't showcase the music or the lyrics alone, but offer equal parts of both. "Visine" works because the music is as out-there as the lyrics. Likewise, "Through Rock Songs," which is less ballsy in both respects, balances the two, and it's solid. Unfortunately, *Words for Living* overall is lopsided, starting with a tremendous bang, only to fizzle horribly at the end. The slow and sweet "Beautiful Woman" is followed by unlisted track 12, an electronic nothingness that goes on and on and.... Turns out the product isn't the sum of its parts. But some of the parts are well worth a listen.—

**Robin A. Rothman**  
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