

Billboard



Living With the Living
TED LEO & THE PHARMACISTS
Label: Touch &; Go

The first half of "Living With the Living" offers well more of everything that's made Leo and his Pharmacists such post-punk studs: melody-kissed stomp (the hand-clappy, torrential "The Sons of Cain"), unabashed melody ("La Costa Brava"), more Clash ("Who Do You Love?") and especially more cynical rage (the satisfyingly unsubtle "Bomb. Repeat. Bomb."). The less cohesive second half offers dub style on "The Unwanted Things" and a Queen-worthy bombastic breakdown called "Annunciation Day/Born on Christmas Day." As usual, the lively state of world affairs dictates Leo's game plan, but rather than just throw dirt around, he's looking for closure ("Everyone wants body counts, and I just want to cry," he sings). He nearly finds it on "The Toro and the Toreador," a surprisingly soulful power ballad with a guitar solo you might expect Slash to pull off in a desert somewhere. —Jeff Vriabel