

REVIEWS

GREEN DAY

*iUno!*

[Reprise]

Fourth act, same as the first: That's the story Green Day aims to tell with *iUno!*, the first installment in a trilogy of albums they'll roll out over the next few months. Having played alt-rock heroes in the post-Cobain '90s and unlikely political rock-opera dramatists in the Bush '00s, the trio inches back toward its punk roots, crafting restless power-pop tunes that—modern studio sheen notwithstanding—might have fit on 1992's pre-fame *Kerplunk*. It's a welcome change, and not just because the band's last album, 2009's *21st Century Breakdown*, buckled under the weight of its own arena-rock ambition. Frontman Billie Joe Armstrong has always excelled at writing songs for pimply young romantics—even the best songs on the 2004 antiwar song cycle *American Idiot* deal with teen angst—and on tunes like "Stay the Night" and "Fell for You," he obsesses over girls, unsure whether to smother them with kisses or with pillows.

Of course, you can't turn 40, pen two rock operas, and become your generation's Bono without growing as a songwriter. Portions of *iUno!* reflect the changes in Armstrong's life, and on "Carpe Diem,"



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he asks, "Making a living, making a killing / What's worth forgiving?" These Bay Area boys have, indeed, made a killing, but even though they're rich old men—"the last gang in town," as Armstrong sings on "Rusty James," referencing the Clash—they consider themselves "too young to die." They're searching for the Fountain of Youth, and even if it's a fool's quest, it's fun to tag along. —Kenneth Partridge

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