



July 2006

SCOTT WALKER  
*The Drift*

5

**Hell's preferred  
crooner fully tears  
the lid off.**

Find yourself wondering just what's "alternative" anymore? Try this uncompromisingly penetrating work—the latest from a 63-year-old expatriate Yank who, before leaping into the avant-garde deep end with *The Drift* (and, before it, 1995's *Tilt*), made his name blending the stained soul of Jacques Brel into a Sinatra-smooth package of crooning vocals and lush arrangements. But "shaved down" (as Walker describes it) doesn't begin to describe the cinematic Rorschach minimalism of *The Drift*, just his third release in over 30 years. Walker's operatic bursts of English bound by neither syntax nor semantics read like T.S. Eliot and *sound* like auditory hallucinations colliding, as monochromatic stabs of guitar and tubax duel in the background with struck meat and pounding stone. With *The Drift*, Walker has gone as far into the atmosphere as one can travel while still being earthbound. (AAB; [4ad.com](http://4ad.com)) *Erick Haight*