

REVIEWS

PISTOL ANNIES

**Hell on Heels**

[Columbia Nashville]

Miranda Lambert recently enlisted friends and fellow singer-songwriters Ashley Monroe and Angaleena Presley to form the old-school trio Pistol Annies, an opportunity to shake off her superstar status for a while and showcase the considerable talents of her lesser-known bandmates. True to Lambert's spitfire image, the characters in *Hell on Heels* encompass several species of bad girl: In the title track they're on the loose, unapologetically taking everything they can from the men—some deserving, some not so much—they come across. Those songs are balanced by articulations of desperation and vulnerability; there's the bride contemplating the limited prospects following a shotgun wedding ("Beige") and another woman so trapped by her circumstances that she's contemplating burning down her house ("Housewife's Prayer"). Lambert leans toward the twangy end of contemporary country on her own; her trio aims even further in that direction, fired up by the gusto in their voices and a sharp-shooting set of songs. —Stuart Munro

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