

# MAGNET

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## REVIEWS <sup>146</sup>

### *Tick... Tick... Boom*

**Deer Tick addresses the controversy of its recorded vs. live personality with separate-but-equal releases**



#### Deer Tick

*Deer Tick Vol. 1*

★★★★★★★

*Deer Tick Vol. 2*

★★★★★★★

PARTISAN

**D**EER TICK HAS ALWAYS UNAPOLOGETICALLY traded on its dichotomy. In the studio, John McCauley's gently introspective indie folk/rock collective reflected his path as hard-rock howler flipped by Hank Williams. Onstage, McCauley unleashed his rock/punk roots and retooled Deer Tick's songs as raggedly adrenalized, fist-pumping anthems played at top volume. With the release of 2011's raw and raucous *Divine Providence*, McCauley decried the attention paid to the disparity between Deer Tick's studio Jekyll and live Hyde, and attempted to merge them on a single album with mixed-yet-intriguing results. In the four years since its polished, keyboard-heavy *Negativity*, Deer Tick went on an unplanned hiatus after McCauley married pop chanteuse Vanessa Carlton and became a father. After a long separation, the band—McCauley, guitarist Ian O'Neil, bassist Chris Ryan and drummer Dennis Ryan—reunited for its near-legendary Newport Folk Festival after-party gigs and rekindled its spark. Decamping to Memphis' Ardent Studios, Deer Tick

quickly tapped into the dual veins that have always defined the group: heartrending folk and heart-pounding rock, all characterized by the band's patented incisive lyrics and blazing musical passion. This time, though, the two identities were given their own spaces to inhabit, resulting in the acoustic lull of *Vol. 1* and the electric blurt of *Vol. 2*.

*Vol. 1*'s gorgeous "Sea Of Clouds," Dylan-esque "Hope Is Big" and crystalline "Limp

Right Back" quiver with quiet emotional power, while *Vol. 2*'s Springsteen-tinged "Don't Hurt," Tom Petty-flavored "Look How Clean I Am" and punk-soaked "It's A Whale" stomp and romp with unrepentant rage and joy. The separate-album approach may not alleviate the debate over Deer Tick's schizophrenic profile, but it clearly points at the consistency and similarities of both directions. —Brian Baker