

CITYLIFE

album reviews

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Cantinero:

Championship Boxing (Rykco)

New York-based singer Cantinero is the self-invention of Brit refugee Chris Hicken, ex-mainman of Brum hopefuls Bigmouth. (Cantinero is Spanish for 'bartender', which is Hicken's steady occupation.) *Championship Boxing* is about the pursuit of a dream, and what to do with the rest of your life when the dream dissolves. These are mature questions and the album embodies mature virtues: well-crafted, with soaring melodies. There's a love letter to his adopted home, 'New York', with its bustling spirit and Latino undercurrents. If the pursuit of stardom is a doomed business, *Championship Boxing* demonstrates what happens when talent outstrips ambition. (MB)

Rating: 7

Standout track: 'Astronaut'

Influences: Todd Rundgren, Big Star

Related artists: Ed Harcourt, Rufus Wainwright