

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

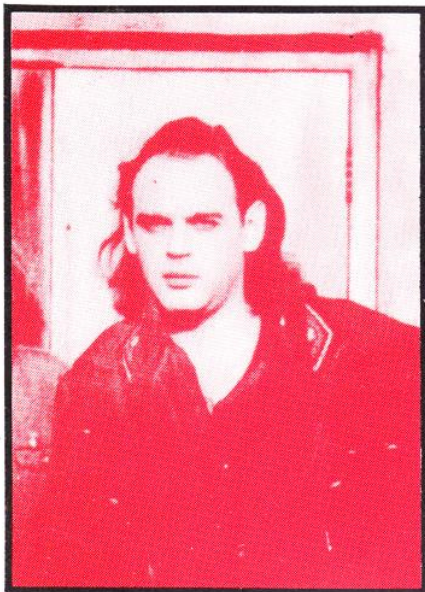
NUMBER 127

JULY 1991

* starring *

rattlesnake kiss

MARK HADLEY PUCKERS UP



the blessing

MIKE DAVIES GIVES THANKS

monkey messiah

ANDY TIPPER
FOLLOWS THE
LEADER



with THE HAMSTERS

plus NEWS * REVIEWS * COMPETITIONS AND MUCH MUCH MORE!

ARTHUR WOOD

The main trumpet blast this month, falls to the 27th Cambridge Folk Festival, which is held once more in the grounds of Cherry Hinton Hall, from Friday 26th to Sunday 28th July. Enquiries can be made via 0223/463346. In true beauty contest fashion, before focussing upon some of the major/minor attractions at this year's Festival, here's the remainder of the current bill: Alistair Anderson's Syncopace, Happy End, The Steve Ashley Band, Lucky Lopez Evans Band, The Charlie Musselwhite Band, New Celeste, Toni Arthur's Music Box, Ruby Blue, Four Men & A Dog, Roaring Lion, Lord Pretender and Rough Riders, Rumillajta, Allan Taylor and Mike Silver, The Fallen Angels, Wizz & Simeon Jones, The Bouncing Czecks, Huw & Tony Williams, Andy Caven, Great Eastern Ceileidh Company and The Foolhardy Folk. And of this year's headliners and lessers, here's a few of the usual palsied thoughts.....

It's a decade since the release of 'Restless Eyes', Janis Ian's last album of new material. Of late, the lady has been resident in Nashville, Tennessee where she has once more been honing her songwriting chops. Her career historically, has been one of 'phases and stages.' Seasons out of the public spotlight, have been interspersed with intervals where her contributions to the world of music have been quite stunning. Artists come and go, falling in and out of public favour along the way. Janis Ian remains, in my judgement, a true original.

While Aztec Camera is resting, Roddy Frame is scheduled for a few solo sets which may just hark back to those acoustic Postcard days of 'Mattress Of Wire' and 'High Land, Hard Rain'. Walk out to a summer's day? Well, at least we can dream. A couple of American performers scheduled to make their Cambridge debuts, have now fallen by the wayside. I trust that one day, Gene Clark's short but significant contribution to the Byrds catalogue will be truthfully judged. It was virtually expunged for last year's Byrds box set. His subsequent solo work, plus spells with Dillard & Clark, McGuinn, Hillman & Clark and latterly as a duo with Textone(ss) Carla Olson, attest to a career studded with highs and lows. Never

in perfect health, sadly Clark died on May 24th. Although Steve Earle seems intent on spending the summer of '91 performing solo dates, his advertised appearance at Cambridge will not be one of those. Replacing Clark and Earle will be the Texas two-some Butch Hancock and Jimmie Dale Gilmore.

Dick Gaughan was much lauded in numerous folk surveys of the eighties, particularly for his 1981 Topic album 'Handful Of Earth'. Through almost two decades as a performer, both solo in bands (Boys Of The Lough and Five Hand Reel), this Scottish troubador has remained unstintingly true to his political beliefs, and bold in getting them across, through the medium of music.

Suzanne Vega, the ice maiden of folk, who hails from the Upper West side of N.Y.C., appears in a solo setting. Her younger, dancing days at the N.Y. High School of Performing Arts, were succeeded by a period scuffling around the Greenwich Village folk clubs, a decade ago. Fast Folk were the first to spot her

potential and place it on record. The A&M label, proved to be her access to a global audience. Erik Hokkanen & The Offbeats album of the same name, was issued by Heartland Records in 1987. He subsequently undertook a solo tour of the UK including the first Birmingham Country Music Festival where he proved to be a devastating fiddle and guitar player.

And then there's Miss Cheryl Wheeler. With three albums already under her belt, none released here, Cambridge marks Cheryl's UK baptism. Her self titled debut album appeared in 1985. Cheryl worked the Cambridge, Massachusetts clubs in those days. Nashville Tennessee is her current base. In 1987 her 'Half A Book' set appeared on Cypress Records. Subsequently signed to Capitol, last year's 'Circles & Arrows' is her latest contribution. Yet to break the mould of being an artist with a record deal, to one with a string of chart songs; I'm sure the latter event gets closer by the day. Tracing the gamut from humour to pathos, with the accent firmly focussed on authenticity, Cheryl's songs hit the bullseye.



▲ MICHAEL HALL

With Brum Beat having dipped its feet in the promotional pond last month, with Messrs Hancock, Gilmore and Taylor, the boys from New Street, enter the fray once more. As usual, there's loadsa connections along the way. On Thursday 18th, making a swift return to the Breedon is my fave Reading Irishman, Terry Clarke. His second, self produced solo album 'Sheely River'

(Minidoka) should be in your local listening emporium by early August. Look out for 'Sligo Hon-eymoon 1946', it's a stone killer track. Sharing the bill with Terry this time around is Michael Hall, a former resident of Austin, Texas. So lets slip in a few connections. When it came to solo album time, both guys enlisted the help of estimable bassman/producer/good guy, J.D. Foster

and cut their albums in Austin. Actually, Michael shared co-production of his 1990 debut 'Quarter To Three' (Record Collect), with J.D., Rich Brotherton and, from The Silos, Walter Salas-Humara. It's a lyrically soul searching piece of work which

leans towards the singer/songwriter genre with a stripped down sound, which, on occasions, comes across as haunting and occasionally eerie and menacing. Back in the early eighties, Hall formed the Wild Seeds. Initially classed as a frenzied garage band, two albums, one EP, numerous line-up changes and seven years down the road, the band became history. Don't miss this rare opportunity to see this dynamic pair of duelling songwriters take to the Breedon stage.

This months entrails entail: Fri 5th Singer's Night (Woodman, Kingswinford), Mad Jocks and Englishmen (Bell & Pump, Edgbaston), Singer's Night (The Market Tavern, Moseley St.); Fri 12th Pat Ryan (Woodman), Desparate Men (Bell & Pump), Colin Thompson (The Market Tavern - club now closes for summer); Fri 19th Martyn Wyndham-Read (Woodman - club now closes for the summer), Eric Bogle (Bell & Pump); Fri 26th Prelude (Bell & Pump - club now closes for summer).

BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

ASSOCIATION WITH

BORDER CAFE

At the Breedon Bar

Presents

TERRY CLARKE

"Call Up A Hurricane" - Best Country Album Of 1990 - Mike Davies

Plus

MICHAEL HALL

from Austin Texas, founding member of the legendary Wild Seeds.

THURSDAY JULY 18th

Breedon Bar And Border Cafe
Persnore Road Cotteridge Birmingham
Phone 021-459-6573 for ticket details.

KURSAAL FLYERS

Chocs Away / The Great Artist

(On The Beach - Archive Series)

Ah lost youth! Your reviewer counts himself lucky to have been there when this excellent band, who in many ways typified pub rock, were young hopefuls with day jobs.

They were stunning, and that's no bullshit - the great songwriting team of drummer Will Birch and guitarist Graeme Douglas had ten or more stone classics written and honed to perfection for the gigs and vocalist Paul Shuttleworth (an Arthur Daley figure before Daley was invented) put them across to perfection.

A following was built and the word spread. It was I, the writer confesses, who recommended them to Clive Selwood (then business manager at Jonathan King's UK Records, now head of the Strange Fruit and Band Of Joy labels), he mentioned it to JK and UK signed the Kursaal (as they were affectionately known).

Which is where this nostalgic CD comes in ... it contains the group's pair of UK label albums, both recorded in 1975 and both on (the same, high value) CD for the first time.

Listening to them again, many years on, the tragedy for me remains that those wonderful debut album songs weren't captured as well as they might have been and that producer Hugh Murphy (who went on to produce Gerry Rafferty's 'Baker Street') wasn't sufficiently in sympathy with the chaps.

However with songs as good as 'Hit Records', 'Speedway', 'Yellow Sox', 'Fall Like Rain', the curious rasta 'Hypochondriac' and Nick Lowe's 'Television' this 75 minute CD made me smile, both with nostalgia and enjoyment. And, as Norma Tanega once so wisely remarked, "I don't think it will hurt if you smile." Please try.

John Tobler

RORY BLOCK

Mamas Blues

(Special Delivery)

Hot on the heels of her contemporary set, 'Turning Point' comes this back to the roots blues collection.

Atmospherically recorded in church it sets Robert Johnson and Tommy Johnson classics alongside her self penned blues. New songs that carry the spirit of her inspirations. Block's vocals and guitar work are stunning, the first woman



I've heard that can equal the best of Bonnie Raitt's endeavours in the same field. And that, dear reader is praise with a vengeance.

Steve Morris



ELECTRONIC

Electronic

(Factory)

The first 90s supergroup? No, just another good pop band I'm afraid, but that'll do for me anyway. I'm not the hype type! 'Get The Message' sets the tone here as it swirls and swivels itself around a formula but its predecessor 'Soviet' is even better with its industrial chords mingling with its agrarian sentiments and making the whole a sociopolitical delight.

Elsewhere, 'Idiot Country' is pure minimal effort maximum efficiency and the dreamstar 'Tighten Up' loosened every nerve in my body! Electronic are a 90s product producing timeless pop. Simplicity is genius. I rest my case.

Kevin Wilson

ROD McDONALD

Bring On The Lions

RICHARD DOBSON

AND STATE OF THE HEART

Hearts And Rivers
(both Brambus - Euro Imports)

McDonald, a New York resident with at least two previous albums to his credit, is yet another graduate from that infinite school of sensitive singer/songwriters. His 1989 Kerville set remains my outstanding personal highlight of that festival. So there lies the bias; which neatly brings us to '... Lions'.

Featuring a baker's dozen of studio and live cuts, the songs are consistently melodic, relatively simple by instrumenta-

tion and never fail to deliver the meaning which Rod intended. A neatly understated disc. Locate and buy, buy, bye.

Dobson's CD fields a further octet of tracks, relative to the dozen songs on his cassette only release (of the same name) which appeared on his own RJD label last year. For the arithmetically dead, you get twenty tracks!

A human being of dogged determination and generally folk/country ways he has occasionally indulged his loves for the rhythms of rock'n'roll on disc. By the way he hails from the south coast of Texas. Need I go further? A Nashville resident this past decade, Dobson has of late taken to the road and the sky more regularly than at any time in his career to date; a move which may well lift him from underground fame to ascending overground exposure and popularity.

Arthur Wood



ATTILA THE STOCKBROKER

Donkey's Years

(Musidisc)

The erstwhile ranting poet veers from reason, 'The Pen And The Sword'/'Sawdust And Empire' to argument sapping viztrionics, 'Retrospective Abortion', in his quest to scythe through the bullshit of the modern world.

'Iron Men Of Rap' deflates a few gold chainbound egos to a backing of Black Sabbath's greatest fiff whilst diggers become liggers at the album's most Bragg-esque.

Attila's balloon bursting of all that aspires to be what it's not is welcome though his descent into the playpen of the brainless lout makes him easily dismissable as a valid commentator.

Steve Morris

CLIVE GRIFFIN

Inside Out

(Mercury)

Griffin takes his smoked honey vocals and pours them over a set of well crafted songs in a

search for the sensual soul sway of Marvin Gaye.

Surprisingly, he finds it. Occasionally the production sails rather too close to the rocky shores of modern dance production technique but when a jazzy lilt of flute and/or strings underpins Griffin can, with justification, claim pole position in the league table of would be soul kings.

Steve Morris

MICKEY JUPP

As The Yeahs Go By

(On The Beach)

Great title, fine album.

Jupp is an ace writer, witty and compact with a sense of roots and a boogie few can match. He'd be a Cooder sized legend if he had an 'ology to espouse instead of a guitar to sling. He'd be revered if he came from the US rather than the Home Counties. As the closing track says, 'Funny Old World' Instead Jupp songs get covered by his heroes and he continues to make heavily ignored classic albums. Like this one.

Steve Morris

MARC COHN

Marc Cohn

(Atlantic)

Readers of Mike Davies' interview with Cohn last month who called to say, 'Who?', must by now have heard the excellent 45 and album opener, 'Walking In Memphis'. Hopefully, as it was with Mike and myself, it will have been enough to send them hurrying for a copy of this album.

Cohn takes the spirit of Randy Newman, Springsteen, Donald Fagen and maybe Bruce Hornsby through a gospel/R&B dip to come up with a set of songs that is at once fresh and familiar.

It's no accident that Cohn has debuted with 'Memphis'; that city is the great US melting pot of blues, country, jazz and gospel.

Similarly Marc Cohn's debut is a brilliant synthesis of traditional American rock/pop and soul styles laced with the works of an inspired writer. He may yet be the man to refurbish the image of the singer-songwriter. Whatever this is the dawning of a major long term talent.

Steve Morris

JOHN GORKA

Jack's Crows

(High Street Records/Windham Hill (US Import))

This is Gorka's third album and his second for the folks from the Hill and, after repeated applications, I can attest that 'Jack's Crows' lives up to the consistent highs of last year's 'Land Of The Bottom Line'. The conclusion being that Gorka is headed for my annual 'Best Of...' already.

A tight editor, as far as the lyric is concerned, Gorka paints the scene, catches the moment, deals the memory, injects the humour, launches the poignant arrow and leaves you breathless - all in a few seconds ... well, at least for those that have ears to hear.

For instance, 'Semper Fi' explores his father's experiences in WW2 ... "There were medals and malaria / The South Pacific war / Through jungles that were paradise / And were paradise no more" and humour about the place where he grew up, "I'm from New Jersey / I don't expect much / if the world ended today / I would adjust".

The verses I've quoted are atypical Gorka fare. Based on the use of simple, everyday words they mesh into telling portraits and carefully weighed up conclusions. Register the name and check him out 'cos, believe me, Gorka is here to stay.

Arthur Wood

VARIOUS

Don't Stop ... DooWop!

(Telstar)

Laurie Vocal Groups - The DooWop Sound (Ace)

DooWop was the street sound of the late 50s and early 60s. A kind of early punk movement with street gangs mutating into vocal groups, using voices in place of unaffordable instruments.

Telstar's 'Don't Stop...' set is the ideal primer covering the familiar hits, The Marcels' 'Blue Moon', Danny And The Juniors' 'At The Hop', Dion And The Belmonts' 'Teenager In Love' and a pre Wall Of Sound Phil Spector production on Curtis Lee's 'Pretty Little Angel Eyes' among the twenty cuts.

Ace's offering is A-Level by comparison serving up thirty tracks by The Passions, Vito And The Salutations and, demonstrating the enduring influence of the form, Randy And The Rainbows, the originators of Blondie's 'Denis(e)'.

Billy Sidell

MALICORNE**Legende**
(Hannibal)

A fourteen track selection drawn from a quintet of the late ensemble's recordings, circa 1978-86. Haunting, traditional folk tunes march side by side with band composed originals. All manage to sustain that overall feel of yesteryear. The instrumentation employed by this innovative gallic group was acoustic and electric without the latter appearing out of place or intrusive.

Considering our insular native traits and the fact that '92 is just around the corner the French lyrical dressing seems entirely apposite.

Arthur Wood

EVAN JOHNS & HIS H-BOMBS**Rockit Fuel Only**
(Rykodisc)

The golden orb is blistering the endless asphalt strip. You wind the windows down and turn on the car radio. Almost immediately the speakers reach meltdown point. It's Evan Johns & His H-Bombs. These guys deliver a high octane brand of down home 50s rock'n'roll which barely allows the listener time to draw breath. Sock 'em hard, and sock 'em again seems to be company policy. Linked to a fuel line of fuzzed guitars with Johns driving vocal finely balanced between a growl and a shout, this Austin based band plays one way only. Loud and Hard. The recommendation - turn it up - for the neighbours!

Arthur Wood

FRANK ZAPPA
The Best Band You
Never Heard In Your Life
(Zappa / Barking Pumpkin)

Ravel's 'Bolero' done reggae. Led Zep's 'Stairway To Heaven' given a Caribbean orchestral brushdown. Evangelist baiting. The theme from 'Bonanza'. All played by a twelve man band of awesome prowess, conducted by a guitar hero composer of illuminating talent and weirdness. A double album, 100% live, culled from the 87/88 tour that got smacked the NEC in '88 featuring music of a kind that doesn't happen often. The gravy may still be lumpy but it sure tastes good.

Steve Morris

DIAMOND HEAD
Behold The Beginning
(Heavy Metal Records)

The Midlands band who influenced a host of US thrash merchants still sound boisterous in the present climate. 'It's Electric', 'Sweet And Innocent' and 'Shoot Out The Lights' are a naive blast of sonic riffs and melodic counterpoints that shaped many of the current prime metal movers.

'Helpless', the track Metallica turned into a garage classic can still induce mindless behaviour and the drawn out whirl of 'Sucking My Love' is, thankfully, nowhere as bad as its title implies.

A softening of their approach, coupled with the fact that Sean Harris was always a limited vocalist, eventually curtailed Diamond Head's aspirations. With a rather ridiculous reunion on the cards, 'Behold The Beginning' is a fitting memory.

Paul Rees

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Deadicated
(Arista)

Los Lobos, Bruce Hornsby, Elvis Costello, Suzanne Vega, Dwight Yoakam, Cowboy Junkies, Burning Spear, Lyle Lovett, Jane's Addiction and more contribute 15 Grateful Dead covers to raise monies to help save and protect rainforests.

En route they demonstrate the enduring wonders of the band's material. A fact often obscured by the cartoon hippie image that dogs the Dead. Furthermore, the (recycled) packaging is a fund of info on both the cause and the artists taking part - an object lesson in itself.

The future of both the forests (in a small way) and The Grateful Dead start here. A worthwhile project and an invigorating tribute to a unique band.

Steve Morris

CANVEY ISLAND
ALL STARS
Escape From Oil City
(On The Beach)

CIA is drawn from the ranks of Damned/Dr Feelgood/Eddie And The Hot Rods sidemen with the intention of whipping it up on the club circuit. On record they blend a handful of respectable, if not earthmoving originals with a clutch of covers that demonstrate exquisite taste: Love's '7 And 7 Is', Warren Zevon's 'Werewolves Of London' and The Church's 'Just For You', for example.

The playing is pro and hard

edged, as you'd rightfully expect. It sounds quickly recorded as though they wanted to catch the spirit before it evaporated. In effect it's the heart and soul of the music biz. Limos may be fun but a VW Beetle is far more enduring.

Steve Morris

RICHIE RICH
Rap Academy
(Fourth And Broadway)

A four sided monster set of rap'n rhythm featuring the hot style stars in meltdown mix format. Queen Latifah's here, Dream Warriors, NWA, Stereo MCs and a Go-Go cut up. Rap relentless and hard. If the sun shines this is the beat-box blaster soundtrack for a hot town summer in the city. Time for me to leave town, I guess!

Steve Morris

**RUBY TURNER**
The Other Side
(Jive)

A superbly assured and measured performance of absolute class from Ruby Turner is only part of the story...

Teamed with renowned studio wizards Hula and K. Fingers for half of the album and Womack and Womack for the remainder, she simply outclasses them. Her vocal talent simply exceeds the imagination of both production and material. The album seems to be aimed squarely at the upmarket end of the coffee table dance set, making ideal noises for the hi-fi hipsters for whom all element of surprise is ironed out. However in 'Provokin' (Love Strokin') there is, given a punchier re-mix, a hit in waiting. Given that the current market favours women soulsters, Whitney, Estefan, Oleta Adams, there must be a niche for a voice such as Ruby's; a voice that could send those ladies packing given the right song.

This is not a bad record, in fact of its kind it's pretty good. That's not damning with faint praise, simply that this genre has become too soft for its own good.

Steve Morris

**JOHN AND MARY**
Victory Gardens
(Rykodisc)

John being Lombardo, formerly of 10,000 Maniacs here teamed with the voice and viola of Mary Ramsey, recorded (rather untidily) by Mitch Easter and with a guest vocal from Ronnie Lane. The melodic style is familiar but while Ramsey's voice has angelic charm it lacks the mixture of pain and naivete Natalie Merchant brought to Lombardo's earlier work. However, invidious comparisons aside this is a pleasant folk-rock album blessed by some haunting strings and at least a couple of fine songs in 'Rags And Flowers' and 'Piles Of Dead Leaves'.

Mike Davies.

THE CHURCH
A Quick Smoke At
Spots (Archives
1986-90)
(Mushroom Import)

A 16 strong collection of rough sketches recorded in small studios, some previously available on B sides others never before issued. Unlikely to attract anyone other than existing Church converts but it's interesting to hear Kilbey's dreamlike, slightly stoned vocals and the psychedelic guitars of Marty Willson-Piper away from the polished confines of finished albums and several cuts here, (notably 'Take It Back', 'We Both Know Why You're Here', 'The Feast'), are actually more enticing than recent 'official' output.

Mike Davies.

THE WATCHMAN
The Watchman
(Hannibal)

Ad Van Meurs is The Watchman. Furthermore Ad Van Meurs is Dutch. OK, so you'd already guessed. After early career flirtations with folk rock and punk anthems this disc marks his solo debut. Pitched comfortably into the field of acoustic folk blues the lyrics are sung in English throughout. Ad sums up the result as "hard folk". To which folk, is the question I'd ask.

Arthur Wood

LONG RYDERS
Metallic BO
(Overground Records)

Shall we call this audio verite, or a bootleg that has somehow been legitimised?

It's a bit of both really, 14 songs collected from sound-desk tapes, fans' walkman recordings, radio shots and studio warm ups.

Musically it goes some way to explaining the band's appeal; they believed in the magic. Whether it was the Pistols, PIL, Neil Young, all of whom are covered here, or staple folk, country and blues classics. It's a rough and ready release that includes swathes of chatter from the band that makes repeated plays a bother (they could have programmed the CD to make the non-music bits skippable).

However I doubt if ace Ryders fan Rick Gershon intended the collection to be anything other than an enthusiasts audio scrapbook.

It succeeds as that for sure, and like any good scrapbook it's well worth thumbing through from time to time.

Steve Morris

**SIOUXIE AND THE BANSHEES**
Superstition
(Wonderland)

Despite vague Hippychick echoes on 'Kiss Them For Me', this is a remarkable return to potency, firmly guided by producer Stephen Hague. Everything's sewn tightly together but the cloth's still flexible enough to bend some suprising exotic corners round the embodied goth roots and swirling psychedelic shadows. Snarls or whispers, it pulses with passion and alienation, still shivering the nerves but also acknowledging the impulse to dance and even illuminating the often ignored folk influences ('Shadowtime').

Given the musical ambience and the general obscurity of the songs, (though 'Cry' is certainly a response to marine slaughter), if there's another 'Twin Peaks' series maybe Lynch should give them a call.

Mike Davies.