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BEAT

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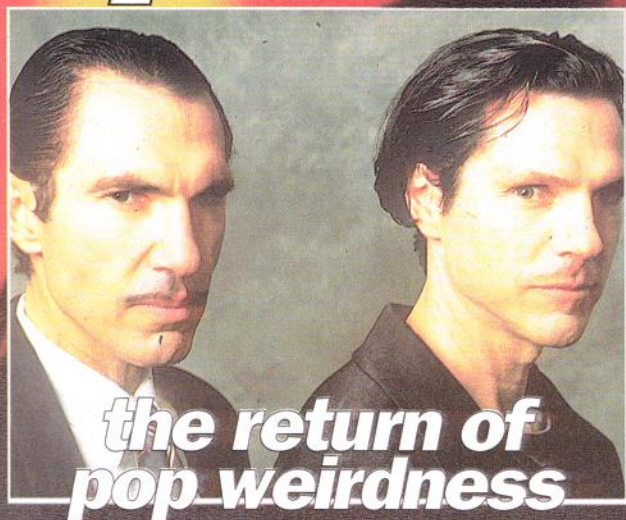
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I THINK therefore I AMBIENT

*Andy Tipper,
Mixmaster Morris
And The Irresistible Force*

**WIN A WICKED
CAN-A-BUS
WEEKEND IN
AMSTERDAM
FOR TWO**

sparks



***the return of
pop weirdness***

*plus: nick lowe ... the cramps ...
hal ketchum ... the gig guide ...
and more ... more ... more*

Dangerous, with its Maytals lift, has a slinky feel, the majority is relentless rhythm stuff for the dedicated only.
★★ Sam Mitchell

JOHN McCUTCHEON

Between the Eclipse (Rounder / Direct Distribution)

First run thro', there's the similar and the seemingly familiar ... vocally, this guy reminds me of Dave Mallett. On Mending Fences I'd defy you to tell the difference ... then there's that folk/country, singer/songwriter sound which they specialise in, down at Bias Recording in Springfield, Virginia ... hell, that piano/keyboard break on Woman Like You could have come from the hands of Chapin Carpenter's man Jon Carroll, except he is singing backing vocal on this cut ... McCutcheon's Old Coat flies close to Mary Chapin's This Shirt from numerous viewpoints ... Some Small Town rocks from end to end à la Springsteen, with a pivotal Pete Kennedy led guitar break midway thro' the track. Finally ... to hell with the foregoing concentration on the derivative [all music is derivative anyway] ... because Between the Eclipse turns out to be a damned fine series of songs by this American based songwriter. Hardly the time to discover that McCutcheon's back catalogue runs to over a dozen titles, including a retrospective and three children's albums. Now where did I put my flexible friend ...
★★★★ Arthur Wood

MICHAEL McNEVIN

Second-hand Stories (Mudpuddle Music [Import])

In the summer of 1992, McNevin, a native of Pleasanton, California was one of the New Folk Award Winners at the prestigious Kerrville Folk Festival. In the process he joined the ranks of previous winners, Nanci Griffith, Robert Earl Keen, David Wilcox, Darden Smith, John Gorka and Tish Hinojosa. Follow my train of thought? Second-hand Stories was originally available on cassette only. Now it is available on CD from Mudpuddle Music, P.O. Box 5062, Pleasanton, California 94566. Included among my 1992 Best of ... selections, I make no apologies for resurrecting this gem ... McNevin's voice is reminiscent of Buddy Mondlock's. And that's no bad thing. Stylistically, McNevin is a storyteller, which is OK in my book. A taxi driver, salesman and a business mogul relate their personal tales in the opening track Busy Life. A night is spent in a Jersey Jail for non payment of a 60 cent rail fare, while Morning Pearl explores the life of a professional lady. The protagonist in Thanks For Asking who is financially embarrassed, is shown some kindness by a restaurant waitress. If the latter lyric fails to restore your faith in the human species, I'd venture that you need some serious help in the area of social consciousness. You only stumble across debut albums with great melodies and clearly focused lyrics, every once in a while. Second-hand Stories is the latest recording to join that rare breed. ★★★ Arthur Wood

RICHIE MILTON & THE LOWDOWN

Straight Ahead - No Stoppin' (Right Track Records)

Milton and co. are simply a bloody fine club blues band. Period. The playing - some of the capital's best circuit names feature - is impeccable and the arrangements of Milton's (often derivative) material are sparky. But at the end of the day it's music to hear in a heaving, sweat damp bar with a medicinal bourbon to hand.

★★ Steve Morris

THE MINUS 3

Old Liquidator (Glitterhouse / Direct Distribution)

A spare time outfit fronted by Scott McCaughey of Young Fresh Fellows, the Minus 3 are more notable for his playmates (Peter Buck, Posies Ken Stringfellow and John Auer, and Walkabouts guests Carla and Chris) than the music (written by McCaughey with his deadpan fractured lyrical take on life) they make. Emperor of the Bathroom is a catchy 12 string jangle, Nick Lowe's Basing Street gets wounded psychedelic workover and When It Comes My Way is a jaunty back porch acoustic strumalong that belies its lyrics, but generally this is the sort of stuff Alex Chilton collectors get up to when they're given a studio to play with.

★★ Mike Davies

NEW YORK DOLLS

Rock'n'Roll (Mercury)



There have been a million bands who wanted to be the Dolls, they all recognised the trash flash smudged glamour, but only The New York Dolls spelt love LUV and meant it.

★★★★ Steve Morris

MICKY NEWBURY

Nights When I Am Sane (Winter Harvest [Import])

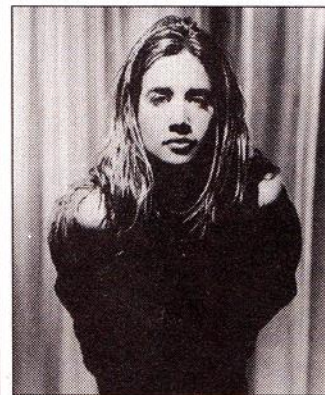
The fourteen songs on this live album mark Newbury's recording debut for the nineties. Have six years really elapsed since his Airborne In A New Age set? Accompanied by a, for the moment NTSC (only), video of the same name, there's no between song chat on ..Sane, just pure undiluted acoustic Newbury. One thing is certain, the voice is somewhat world weary these days! Seven of the songs source from previous works, while the title cut in a two verse / chorus form was

known as Leaving Kentucky, circa the 1977 ABC / Hickory album Rusty Tracks. So if your mathematics is workin' OK, ya' get half a dozen truly new tunes. Ever since my [shamefully cheap] introduction to this man's catalogue, via a 25p investment in a mint copy of his rarest recording - Looks Like Rain on Mercury, circa 1969 - I've hung on Newbury's every recorded word. With a thirty odd year staff song-writing career, through the sixties and seventies, Newbury was instrumental in redefining the substance of the intelligent country song lyric. Maybe it's about time that Bear Family produced a full blown commemorative box set, as Genius hardly covers the bases.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

HEATHER NOVA

Oyster (Butterfly)



Nova's third release is her first 'proper' album - the most recent was a live recording, the first a set of unadulterated demos which so impressed Youth, the currently fashionable producer and instrumental half of Blue Pearl, that he released them immediately. Despite her career having been given such a powerful kick-start, Nova has kept both (bare) feet on the ground, and even her introspective, occasionally hippy-drippy lyrics cannot detract from a silky-smooth vocal performance whose embrace, though gentle, cannot be escaped. Conceptually, her nearest neighbour is Tori Amos, although there are a couple of jarring moments when her voice sounds worryingly like Beverley Craven's. The standout track, Maybe An Angel, would top the charts if there were any justice in the world of pop. Sadly, as we all know, there isn't.

★★★★ Andy Mabbett

OAKENFOLD & OSBORNE

The Perfecto Album (Perfecto / East West)

Still don't know about the all conquering art of the remixer; it still seems like judging Picasso by the guy that made the picture frames. And for much of this various artists set - note how Oakenfolds & Osborne are billed above U2, INXS, Simply Red, Stone Roses - that doubt lingers. Certainly they take U2's Even Better Than The Real Thing into new areas and add a rather more sinuous backbone to Hucknall and Co's Something Got Me Started but the duo's work on INXS and Stone Roses is just so much aural waffle.

★★ Sam Mitchell

**recorded
delivery**

singled out



Some of these have been out a while, but they tend to sport the kind of attitude that relegates them to the realms of obscurity. Shame, 'cause there's some bloody punchy stuff amongst this lot ... take LIFE OF AGONY's This Time (Roadrunner) for instance - a growling, metallic, gothic slice of Brooklyn punk; JOYRYDE's Rumorosa (Kill City), demonstrates that the good ol' buzzsaw Brit variation still has some bite to it; SHIHAD may hail from New Zealand, but their very Killing Joke sound on Stations (Noise) is well post-Britpunk (produced by KJ's Jaz too); FNM's Billy Gould called Shihad 'fucking awesome', which are the kind of comments that speak volumes, even if they're uttered by a band's press office, which was the case with the SPLATTERHEADS' ep (Subway) - 'this band fucking rule!' they claimed. And they weren't wrong; I wasn't wrong about HEADSWIM either, I kept telling everyone they'd happen, and they are. If you STILL haven't come across them, pick up Soup and get a life; Don't buy HEAD LIKE A HOLE's Jane's Addiction-like Fish Across Face (Noise) though, unless you want your brains well and truly fried; a bit of an edge is provided by LOW POP SUICIDE's Kiss Your Lips (World Domination); more punk-poppiness is provided by BAD RELIGION's Stranger Than Fiction (Dragnet); punk-pop's the thing at the mo' ain't it? AMERICAN TV COPS are fine purveyors of the genre - just catch a load of Atrocity Girl (Pest); and punk-rap, but with poppy horns is DOG EAT DOG's forte and their If These Are Good Times (Roadrunner) is a stormer; a refreshingly heavy 'indie' sound is thrown at us by FISHMON-KEYMAN's ep (Copasetic); things are looking decidedly squally again - hardcore punk-rappers, DOWNSET's No More Freedom In A Cage (Abstract) has a bucket load of grit; as does STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT's Super Monkey (World Domination), which sounds like Tool crossed with Birthday Party; and Birthday Party come to mind again on COP SHOOT COP's excellent Two At A Time (Big Cat); and finally, I recommend the crunching, industrial metal of NERVE's Fragments (Play It Again Sam). Buy them all. Max