

**BRUM**

55p

# BEAT

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## Counting Crows



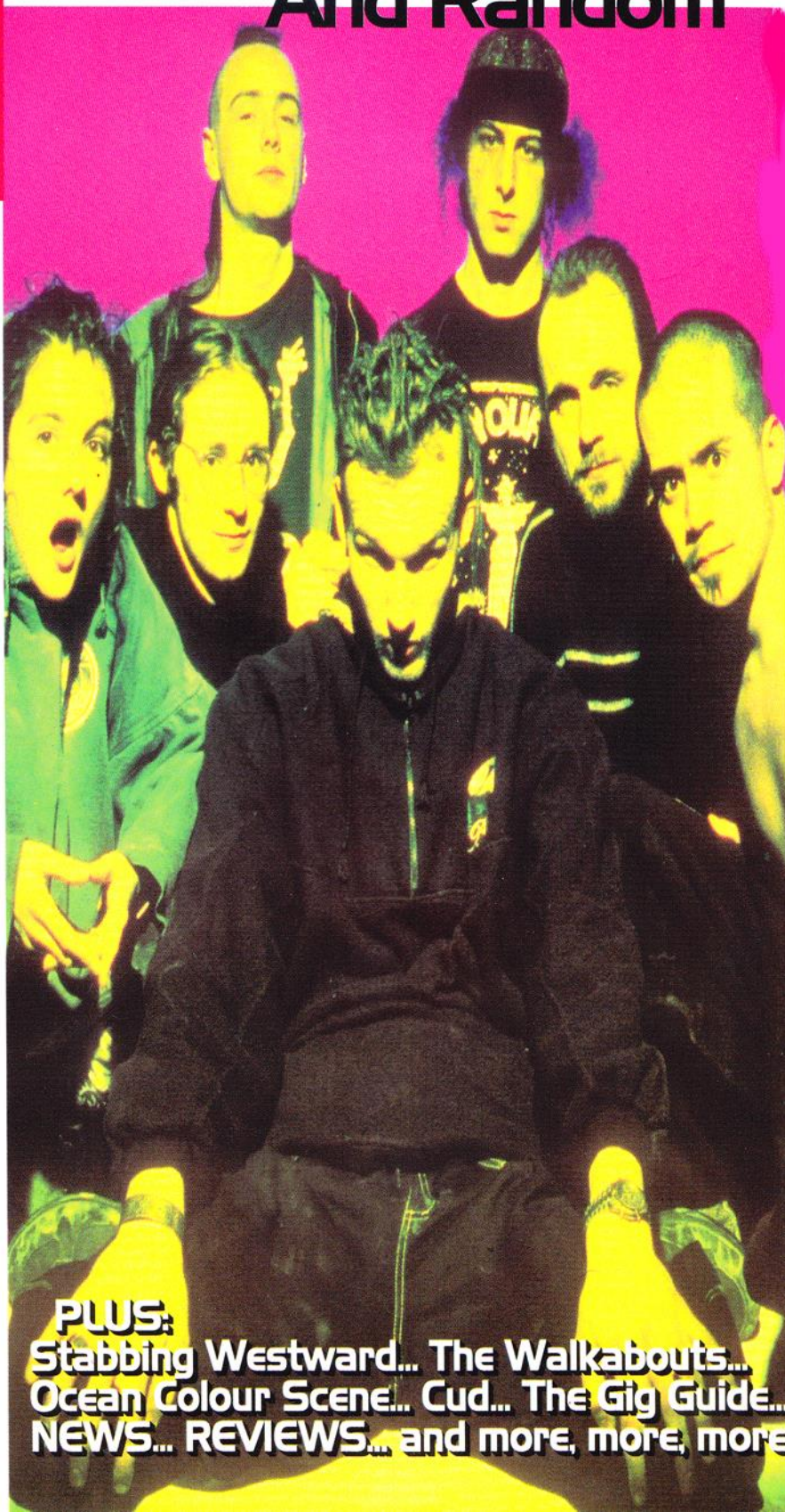
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**Say a  
Prayer For  
The Cowgirl**

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interludes with the slick sounding productions they are renowned for. Though in fairness, it's their Alexander O'Neal ballad style rather than hard dance that we're talking about. There's also a stark reading of Billie Holiday's Strange Fruit and a spoken poem, You've Taken My Blues And Gone that add to the picture painted rather eloquently.

To edit the whole black experience into a seventy minute gospel flavoured musical experience, and then to wrap it in pop finery is a brave thing to attempt; without the Sounds' obvious soulful sincerity, the producers' taste and an abundant intelligence, it would have been a disaster; that it isn't, is praise indeed.

★★★

Steve Morris

## WORLDS APART

Together (Bell / Arista)

Normally this would have been binned on sight; what use do we have for a sub Take That stylist's fantasy that exists only to slaughter the likes of classic old Spinners / Tavares / Robert Knight soul hits with a sixth form girlie dance routine? Right, none. But this set features perhaps the comedy performance of the year; a soppy lovelorn ballad called, wait for it, Arnold Schwarzenegger - "Cause Arnold Schwarzenegger is in all your dreams each night / Where Arnold Schwarzenegger gets to kiss and hold you tight / But he couldn't begin to kiss you like I could ..." Quite, lads, quite.

★

Steve Morris

## RE-ISSUES

## MARVIN GAYE

The Very Best Of (Motown)

For The Very Last Time (Music De Luxe)

The generously packed, 22 track best of set concentrates, not unnaturally, on Gaye's commercial high points. Thus there are eight duets included (with Diana Ross, Kim Weston and Tammi Terrell) alongside his solo successes. The high points are too numerous to list but amply illustrate the life long dichotomy that pulled him from spiritual to carnal delight, both of which he elucidated in vocal tones capable of simultaneous baptism and seduction.

For The Very Last Time is a budget set taped on his very last tour and whilst the sound quality is bootlegish (albeit via the desk) and Gaye's voice sounds narcotically ravished, the soul shines. The long workouts on Distant Lover and Sexual Healing are particularly revealing of Gaye's sublime vocal genius.

★★★★★ / ★★

Steve Morris

## CURTIS MAYFIELD

Get Down To The Funky Groove (Charly)

Whilst accepting that this may not be a definitive Mayfield collection to cast an informative light onto the all star tribute that's just landed, it is a pretty impressive thirteen track lucky bag of the man's seventies sides. The elegant, supple funkiness of Freddie's Dead, Superfly and Move On Up, here in a nine minute groove version, still inform the work of the intelligent funkster, whilst the spirit of If There's A Hell Below We're All Gonna Go and Pusherman reverberates in the sound and styles of many.

Maybe Mayfield was too diffident a performer to reap the accolades landed on James Brown and Sly Stone but his intelligence is surely a far more worthy influence on the course of black music.

★★★

Sam Mitchell

## VARIOUS / DEEP BEATS (Deep Beats / Castle Communications)

Castle's new Deep Beats label promises to be the serious dance fan's sound bible in the coming months if the five album launch pack is any indication. We're not simply talking hastily thrown together repackaging of here today, gone tomorrow bedroom cuts, but the beginnings of an intelligent long term overview of what is possibly music's dominant genre. The label is subdivided; ESSENTIAL DANCEFLOOR ARTISTS concentrates on one act hit compilations and kicks off with Volume 1: CROWN HEIGHTS AFFAIR and Volume 2: D TRAIN. C.H.A. came from the seventies funk school that also provided such as Brass Construction; bands taking a lead from Isaac Hayes re-draft of the blueprint. The album delivers a batch of original 12 inch mixes and a couple of remixes that point both to the timelessness of dance trax and to the faceless manipulators that weaken the credibility of its creative claims. D Train are a different thing altogether with the synth beat of Music and You're The One For Me standing tall more than a decade after release as progenitors of today's sound. ESSENTIAL DANCEFLOOR CLASSICS VOLUME 1 follows the various artists route with a commercial batch from Shalamar, The Whispers, Bohannon, Sharon Redd and the still irritating Last Night A DJ Saved My Life. ESSENTIAL UNDERGROUND DANCEFLOOR CLASSICS VOLUME 1 digs deep with names that are possibly hip passwords only though an ear to many of them reveals sounds that have been sample staples. ESSENTIAL HI-NRG CLASSICS VOLUME 1 is perhaps the most intriguing, culling, as it does, eleven cuts from the early eighties hey day of US west coast 'gay' disco. The electro sound on display being the obvious father of techno with Patrick Cowley the guiding light.

All discs are well annotated and well mastered suggesting that this is the beginning of a reference quality series.

★★★★

Sam Mitchell

## VARIOUS

New Jack Swing 3

(Mastercuts / Beechwood)

A kinda Now That's What I Call Dance for the cognoscenti; a hour long twelve cut mix of TLC, Heavy D, Wreckx-N-Effect, SMV, Mary J. Blige and more. Stir in intelligent sleeve info for a full value package.

★★★

Sam Mitchell

## VARIOUS

3000 Volts Of Stax

(Stax / Ace)

Twenty one rare or previously unreleased cuts from the vaults of what I personally reckon to be the soul label - Memphis' Stax. And the man who simply has to be the best ever soul man, Otis Redding heads the list with two previously unheard gems whilst Booker T., Albert King, Eddie Floyd, Carla Thomas and The Mar-keys head the support list.

If you can't understand why Primal Scream are so keen on making pilgrimages to Memphis, listen to the guide book.

★★★★

Steve Morris

## FOLK & COUNTRY

## THE DEAR JANES

Sometimes I

(Swim / Castle Communications)

An Anglo-American duo of Ginny Cleve and Barbara

Marsh, the immediate comparison is with the Roches and Indigo Girls (and perhaps even Dory Previn), not just because it's girls with folksy roots, close harmonies and acoustic guitars, but because they share a similar quirkily gentle humour and poignancy approach to their songwriting and subject matter. Prime example is the first track, Girl Of Your Dreams ("sweeter than the girl next door your mother's house"), a touching ugly duckling "I just want to be liked...a lot" number that slowly reveals its psycho colours when it gets to comparisons such as "sharper than the cleaver waving behind your head" and "softer than the snake I hung on the chandelier". Other gems address convent education (Brides Of The Cross), death (Outside My Window), brush-off letters (Dear Jane) and masturbation (My Guilty Hand), adding up to an album that manages to be both naive and world weary, and well worth letting your ears share some time with.

★★★★

Mike Davies

## IRIS DE MENT

My Life (WEA)

Her debut, Infamous Angel, was one of last year's diamonds, not just in country but in contemporary music per se. Now comes what's essentially more sequel than follow-up, again addressing deeply autobiographical matters in a style that manages to be back porch and homespun without once sounding sickly sentimental or maudlin. Her blue collar Okie country roots are as evident in her achingly plaintive keening voice as the simple, classic acoustic Nashville (Carter/Louvins) approach to the music, but what really elevates DeMent is the naked emotional honesty of her songs as she sings about childhood, hard times, broken hearts and, on the album's stand-out, most affective lament, No Time To Cry, the death of her father and its clash with her own mid-life crisis. If this album doesn't make you cry, then you deserve to spend a lifetime locked in a room with Vince Gill and Garth Brooks.

★★★★★

Mike Davies

## JOHN DENVER

The Flower That Shattered The Stone (Music Club)

It says much that Denver's latest album debuts on a budget label at £5.99; and it's not that he has become altruistic of late!

In fact, despite the heavyweight presence of ex Presley and Hot Band men Glen D. Hardin and James Burton and session genius Larry Knechtal (he was the piano on Bridge Over Troubled Water), the album is water weak and insipidly pale compared to Denver's commercial peak when, whatever you thought of the man, he had a certain melodic gift.

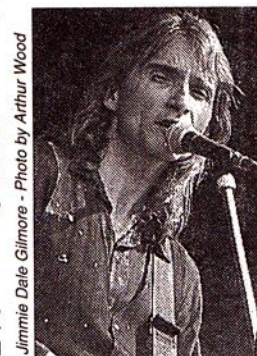
Curiously, however, Denver can still play the NEC on his rare visits, so the market for this is probably assured.

★★

Sam Mitchell

JIMMIE  
DALE  
GILMORE &  
MUDHONEY  
EP (Sub Pop)

The five cuts here, (hardly an album - more a quintessential fusing of Lubbock and Lollapalooza licks), include three new recordings and two previous releases. The latter being Tonight I'm Going To Go Downtown from Jimmie's 1991 Elektra album After Awhile and Mudhoney's Blinding Sun from their 1992 Reprise release Piece Of Cake. Tonight ... also opens proceedings with Mudhoney





giving Jimmie's classic country anthem some serious Seattle sonic surgery. Returning the favour, Jimmie reprises Blinding Sun and then, the inheritor of Hank's vocal chords joins forces with Mark Arm and the boys, for a rendition of Townes Van Zandt's Buckskin Stallion Blues.

So there you have it. Issued by Seattle's own Sub Pop indie label, I can't see this one gaining a UK release. Guess it's a case of shelling out the shekels for an import copy. Well worth the effort though.

★★★★

Arthur Wood

(Note: It may be that our very own record industry balance of trade deficit, Arthur Wood, obtained a mortgage for an import of this gem, but for the rest of us Sub Pop have released it in the UK at standard prices! Ed.)

## JIMMY LAFAVE Highway Trance

(Bohemia Beat / Import)

Now and again, you stumble across a recording where every single piece fits. LaFave's latest poetic gemstones are stunning, being a mix of raucous red dirt (blues tinged) rockers and gentle, perceptive ballads. The players definitely lost all their socks by the time these recording sessions were over.

Raised in neighbouring Oklahoma, LaFave returned to the state of his birth and settled in Austin, Texas circa 1985. In those days, he merged his nights performing on the stages of Sixth Street clubs, with days spent dragging sixteen wheels down the long and winding road (OK, Interstate). With the onset of the nineties and the passing of an assortment of pickers and drummers, LaFave's Night Tribe evolved into one of the tightest quintets in a town over endowed with classy musicians. On Highway Trance the cast of supporting players is drawn from Austin's best, including Gene Elders (fiddle) and Brian Wood (acoustic guitar).

The fifteen tunes on this self produced collection were all composed by Jimmy, except for the Kevin Welch ballad Early Summer Rain, and the rowdy Austin After Midnight co-written with previous LaFave collaborator, Bob Childers.

Just a few reasons to be ecstatic - the politically incorrect sexual references on Shakin' In Your Hips, the angst in Elders' fiddle on the outro to Give Your Sweet Love To Me, the sacred tears raining down, Webb's cheesy 60's Farfisa on the bluesy Leslie, Talk To Me, my perception of heaven - aka Austin After Midnight, those gypsy patterns in Every Line Of Your Face, Larry Wilson's chunky blues guitar throughout, and so own ... Most of all, it's the words and melodies of Jimmy LaFave.

Jon Landau, Jon Landau the catchphrase to recall ...

!

★★★★★

Arthur Wood

Tom Russell & Barrence Whitfield



## TOM RUSSELL & BARRENCE WHITFIELD

### Cowboy Mambo (Round Tower)

In which the great roots rocker Russell regroups with

R&B shouter Whitfield to prove that musical lightning does, indeed, refuse to strike twice.

The duo's last outing Hillbilly Voodoo was a fresh brew with Whitfield's exuberant blueswailing and Russell's refined country hues adding complementing spices to the listening liquor.

Here, though their personal party is still in swing, the product fails to effervesce. The covers of The Band's Daniel And The Sacred Harp and Steve Earle's Devil's Right Hand are at best perfunctory whilst the take on Richard Thompson's I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight is woefully misguided. And then there's the Tribute To Ukulele Ike - Insufficient Sweetie. Complete with ersatz 78 surface noise, it's so coy as to be laughable.

Time for both guys to do what they do best - alone.

★★★

Steve Morris

## RAFA RUSSO Despite Myself (Mauve)

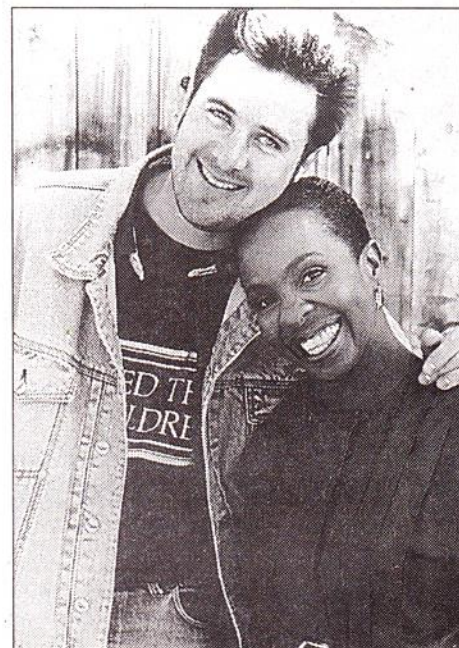
From Spain by way of Argentinean parents and a brief stint in Greenwich Village, singer-songwriter Russo's second album drips 60s troubadour melodies with a warm, almost buttery voice draped across a collection of songs recounting his own experiences and personality schisms of the past couple of years. There's dabs of blues and jazz

here and there, but the dominant style's rootsy pop in almost a cross between David Blue and Lloyd Cole, and there's no question but that he writes both articulate (if occasionally pretentious) lyrics and hummable tunes, none more so than on the unshakeably infectious Clouds Going Round My Head. Not an essential album, but one you'll find yourself playing on a regular basis if you ever acquire a copy.

★★★★

Mike Davies

Vince Gill & Gladys Knight



## VARIOUS Rhythm Country And Blues

(MCA)

The proposition of this album, that R&B and country are basically the same, is sound. Indeed, some years ago, the legendary Willie Mitchell told me that when he was producing Al Green's classics in Memphis, far from wanting to make soul sides, Al was trying to make country records.

It's fitting, then, that of the eleven duets that pair a country singer with a soul stylist, Al Green, in the company of Lyle Lovett, is one of the few to succeed. He and Lyle's Funny How Time Slips Away marries the musics perfectly, then with Al's long-time ambition

and Lyle's blues dabbling with his big band, that outcome could be predicted.

Less predictable is the ordinariness of teaming Clint Black with The Pointer Sisters, Marty Stuart with The Staple Singers, Vince Gill with Gladys Knight and so on. They all sound, well, perfunctory, as if it was done for a Vegas supper show. The imagination was sure left at home.

On the plus side George Jones hams it up with B.B. King on Patches, Aaron Neville gels with Trisha Yearwood on I Fall To Pieces and Sam Moore (of Sam & Dave) sounds great with the late Conway Twitty on Rainy Night In Georgia, even though Moore's ad libbing at the fade is beyond Twitty's country style. And why does the track end with Moore's anguished sounding cry of 'Conway!' - very spooky in view of Twitty's soon after, untimely end.

★★★

Steve Morris

## RE-ISSUES

### PHIL OCHS

## All The News That's Fit To Sing / I Ain't Marching Any- more (Hannibal)

It may seem superfluous to reissue this pair of albums from 1964 / 1965, especially as their content is rooted in the journalistic approach to folk that dominated the new writers of the time. It is not though, that simple. Ochs, a trained journalist incidentally, was a complex character and an observant writer whose influence has endured the passing decades. Indeed it is nigh on impossible to hear Billy Bragg without hearing Phil Ochs.

Further, put simply, Ochs' subject matter was, in broad terms, the subjugation of humanity to fear, poverty, violence and indignity in all forms and whilst the sands of the specifics may have momentarily shifted; until all injustice is erased the songs have relevance. And whilst many of Ochs' protest singer contemporaries were simple sloganeers, his language was, and remains, educated, focused and laser sharp.

Sadly, one can't help but feel that Ochs, who committed suicide in 1976, would find the continued relevance of these works rather depressing.

★★★★ (each)

Steve Morris

## BLUES & JAZZ

### BILL FRISELL

## This Land (Elektra Nonesuch)

For one horrible moment, the opening bars had me thinking that this was Frisell's application for a place in Garth Brooks' band, but thankfully that soon passed and normality - or at least, what stands for normality in Frisell's mind - was restored.

Don't let Elektra Nonesuch's classical music pedigree fool you - this is jazz in the Windham Hill/ ECM sense of the word, although I don't think anyone's mixed waltz and tango rhythms (in one tune!) on either label.

★★★

Andy Mabbett

### JIMI HENDRIX

## Blues (Polydor)

It's no knee-jerk, cow-towing to the album title that finds Hendrix in the Blues reviews. OK, so he re-directed forever, the course of rock guitar playing, but never forget, that even at his furthest out, he was playing the blues. A black musician on the roads of the USA in the early sixties, civil rights marches and