

**BRUM**

the midlands music monthly and more!

55p

# BEAT

april 1995

issue 170

## ***micky greaney***

*... and his little  
symphonies for the kids*



***the boo radleys***  
*...waking up to success*

*plus:*  
*pato banton*  
*ocean colour scene*  
*mentalgen*  
*spin playground*  
*the essential gig guide*  
*news*  
*reviews*



# recorded delivery

**a guide to the brum beat star ratings**

★★★★ The meaning of life captured on magnetic tape ★★★★★ You owe it to yourself to own this

★★★ Tempting, but a tape of a mate's will do ★★ Have a listen then decide ★ Obsessives only

## ALPHABET SOUP

**Layin' Low In The Cut (Mammoth)**

Just as Freakpower take a musical lean on Sly Stone, Alphabet Soup have obviously been well simmered in Gil Scott Heron. This is a musically and verbally literate set that's as lyrically sharp as it's musically cool. Recommended.

★★★ Sam Mitchell

## ARCHERS OF LOAF

**Vee Vee (Alias)**

Dissed in some quarters as a cracked Pavement, Eric Bachmann's post grunge outfit more often sound like a lo fi roughshod Roxy Music, Harnessed In Slums and Nevermind the Enemy in particular harking back to the Enosisms of the first album and stripping away the glam sheen to reveal the bare wires. Through the throbbing guitar likes of 1985 and Let The Loser Melt, melody skitters merrily across the surface while Bachmann's pained vocals add resonance to songs about losers and under-achievers such as Greatest Of All Time, Underdogs Of Nipomo and the memorable Death In The Park, while a more experimental side surfaces through Step Into The Light and the quirky Underachievers March and Fight Song. A multi-grain experience.

★★★ Mike Davies

## ED BALL

**If A Man Ever Loved A Woman (Creation)**

A solo outing (with mates like Boos Carr and Sice, Nick Heyward, Andy Bell and his missus Idha) for the teenage Television Personalities / Teenage Filmstars / Times maverick popster. Acoustic rainy day bedsit stuff sporting mournful harmonica and titles like The Ballad Of A Lonely Man, You Only Miss Me When I'm Bleeding and It's Kinda Lonely Where I Am written in rooms from Mill Hill to Dallas (or in transit) Ball comes over how Neil Young might have developed if he lived in a grey British seaside town. The vaguely Cohen-ish title track, country loping The Arizona Lover and the disarmingly beguiling folksy pop of Ton Of blues (a potential surprise hit) head the pack, but it all has tea and toast charm.

★★★ Mike Davies

## MARTIN BELMONT

**Big Guitar (Demon)**

If you like guitar based western themes like the Big Country; have a twinkling nostalgia for Anton Karas and can tolerate Cajun workouts and reggaeed Johnny Cash instrumentals then this gem is for you.

★★★ Steve Morris

## BLAMELESS

**The Signs Were All There (China)**

From Sheffield but sounding like they just stepped over a mid West white picket fence with dust on their Levis, clutching guitars and a Bud, production credits for the debut album belong to the team behind Radiohead, Dinosaur Jr and Buffalo Tom and while Blameless don't actually sound like any of them, the kindred musical spirit is apparent. Guitars alternately jangle, ring and crash, vocals swing between ache and anger, and while they sometimes lose definition when they hit rocking out mode, the muscular confidence behind such tracks as the slow building Worthless, the ferocious Town Clowns and the classic American guitar pop of More Than I, points a well deserved accusing finger.

★★★ Mike Davies

## BMX BANDITS

**Getting Dirty (Creation)**

Despite the title, this first full time line up of the Scottish survivors of 80s anorak pop is as pleasurably twee as you could hope for, though it's a little disconcerting to find the band that gave you Serious Drugs now singing Tiny Fingers, a celebration of babies. Calling up the spirit of Goffin and King may be overstating the case somewhat, but this is certainly in the tradition of classic Bacharach pop, gentle lapping pop melodies, a wisp of flute, a tinkle of vibes, the ghost of 60s British romantic movies and thoughts of Harpers Bizarre.

★★★ Mike Davies

## RANDY BURNS

**Of Love And War / Evening Of The Magician / Songs For An Uncertain Lady (ZYX Music - Import)**

These folk gems arrived care of the New York avant garde label ESP Disk, in 1966, 1968 and 1970 respectively. By the third

album, the bones of what became The Skydog Band were in place and Burns went on to record three more band albums for Mercury [1971] and Polydor [1972 & 1973]. Burns' first trio of releases have been lovingly reissued by the German based ZYX Music label, along with numerous other ESP titles. The first album is set in acoustic mode with voice and guitar only, while percussion, bass and organ/piano augment the second set. By the third disc, Burns and the boys had gone electric. Possessed of a plaintive voice, these treasures should grace every self respecting folkie's CD rack. Which brings me to the first question ... are you guys at Mercury and Polydor going to get your act together now? By the way, during 1991, Randy issued a cassette titled The Cat's Pyjamas. It's available by mail order from Picket Fence Productions, 11 North Street, North Branford, Connecticut 06471. I've already got my copy, so that's where I've put my money. How about you?

★★★★ (each) Arthur Wood

## ELVIS COSTELLO

**Punch The Clock / Goodbye Cruel World (Demon)**

Two more in the remastered and expanded Elvis series ... and once again they sound better than ever and the bonuses are generous, seven more on Punch and nine on Goodbye.

Punch The Clock was perhaps the commercial peak with the brassy, er, punch of Let Them All Talk and the swagger of Everyday I Write The Book making Costello omnipresent on radio and TV at the time. The album also held Shipbuilding and Pills And Soap. Among the extras, a couple of hot live cuts and an extraordinary, Allen Toussaint produced version of Yoko's Walking On Thin Ice.

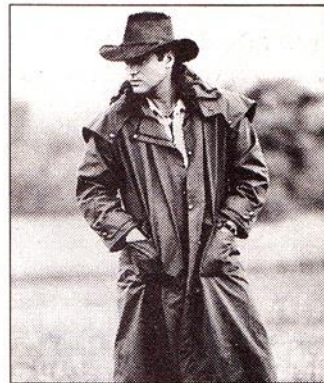
EC's own sleevenote calls Goodbye Cruel World 'our worst album' and for sure the studio sheen and claustrophobic production do rather anchor it in time but underneath the songs remain leagues ahead of Costello's peer group. And look out for track 23 (on this 22 track CD!) - a stunning version of ... well find out for yourself and wonder why it didn't beat the retreat too!

★★★★ / ★★ Steve Morris

## BILLY RAY CYRUS

**Storm In The Heartland (Mercury)**

I saw a piece recently that suggested that Billy Ray had been wronged with the harsh crits and that he wasn't too



bad after all. So I listened ... and, well there's no conversion here. Cyrus sounds like a man determined to win the Mellencamp audience with his barn filling rock, but without losing the country audience. Fair enough except the material is conveyor belt dull and the star's voice is one of the least charismatic you're ever likely to hear.

You can understand the one off Achy Breaky success (anyone wanna tell me it was worse than Agadoo?) but I simply cannot comprehend the career it precipitated. ★ Steve Morris

## TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY

**Vibrator (Columbia)**

Well, despite the new gold curled look, TTD thankfully hasn't reinvented himself musically in the same wilfully perverse manner of Neither Fish Nor Flesh, nor has he simply regurgitated a carbon of Symphony Or Damn. Of the two though, it's the latter to which this has the closer kinship. A rawer, rockier edge dominates, perhaps best embodied in the blatant Station to Station 'homage' of Supermodel Sandwich, though elsewhere (as on Undeniable or we Don't Have That Much Time) you'll also find him in a jazzy blowing and funky moods that pulls together such strands as Miles Davis, Bobby Hebb and (with Read My Lips) Sly Stone. TTD's Recurring Dream even manages to evoke shades of Roxy Music. And illustrates the man's sense of humour on an album that explores physicality and spirituality in lyrics dealing with sex, insecurity and a need to be reassured and accepted. It's a diverse set, but whether that comes in the shape of first single, Holding On To You, a classic slice of Sam Cooke sounding R&B, fattened up with Atlantic brass fills, or If You Go Before Me (about the after-



# recorded delivery

## THE EVERLY BROTHERS Original British Hit Singles (Ace)

The oft anthologised Everlys on a sensibly priced twenty two tracker that simply places the singles, A sides and their flips, that arrived on the deservedly legendary London label between 1957 and 1960 chronologically.

The remastering sparkles and the sleeve notes entertain. A five star necessity.  
★★★★★ John Davies

## DUB WAR Pain (Earache)

Every town should have a Dub War - a blistering groovecore smash with rasta undertones. But it seems Newport, Gwent is the only location angry enough to spit out something as ferocious as Pain. Don't worry though, Dub War are a hardworking live band, so it shouldn't be too long before they come and show YOUR town how to put together some metal, funk and ragamuffin and go to War.  
★★★★ Max

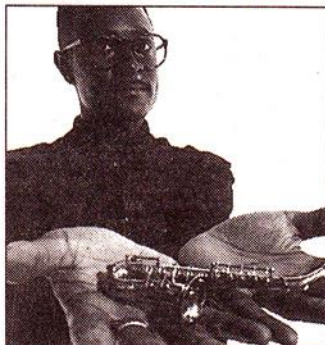
## CLIVE GREGSON People and Places (Demon)

His first solo album proper (after the mail order demos and live tracks collection Carousel of Noise) since dissolving the Gregson-Collister partnership and relocating to Nashville, P&P finds Gregson putting aside the blues to which their latter work was gravitating and returning to the melancholic storytelling songwriter mode of Strange Persuasions. As such, several numbers come with a distinct folk ballad feel, most obviously so in Mary's Divorce, conceived as a contemporary sequel to the traditional Mary's Wedding, but also in Medicine House (asylum, prison, any similar institution for the terminally desolate) and Camden Town, a movingly bittersweet reflection on unfulfilled love that's among the finest songs he's written. But from Camden Town to When This War is Over, a sober riposte to the upcoming VE/VJ celebrations, there's not a weak track among these songs about regrets and self-recriminations (Blue Rose, My Favourite Lies, Restless), fair deceivers (Feathers, Gabriel), lonely hearts (Box Number), death (Black Train Coming) and, by way of a change, love attained (Lily Of The Valley). And if you need a single reason to buy, then just lend an ear to My Eyes Gave The Game Away which in the line "I dreamed of streets of silver but I dragged my feet of clay" earns its immortal place in the hall of betrayed by my broken heart fame. God wants you to buy this album.  
★★★★★ Mike Davies

life) which could easily be a superior West End show tune, this vibrator delivers total satisfaction.

★★★★ Mike Davies

## ALVIN DAVIS Let The Vibes Decide (Ripe)



Huge in the US where his Kenny G-ish sultry sax style and sly groove have charts and radio of their own, Birmingham's Alvin Davis easily delivers the goods with his second album but one can't avoid the conclusion that beyond a limited cognoscenti, wine bars and talkover tracks on Choice and Kiss FM, Davis' major potential lies beyond these shores.  
★★★ Sam Mitchell

## BRUCE DICKINSON Alive In Studio A / Alive At The Marquee Club (Raw Power)

On the plus side, Bruce has got a helluva band together, who can bang out a precision rocky, funky noise...but, well, there's of' Bruce's voice, isn't there, which I've never been that partial to. Also, there're two CDs here, containing near enough identical material - one live, the other, er, nearly live. I guess a treat for die-hard fans - a little too much for me.  
★★ Max

## BILL FRISSELL Music For The Films Of Buster Keaton - Go West; The High Sign / One Week (Elektra Nonesuch)

Frisell wrote this music for live performances during which the relevant films were screened - thus reviving a dying cinematic art. These two studio albums offer those of us who missed the subsequent screenings a chance to hear the tunes, but sadly there are no plans for the films to be reissued with them as soundtracks.

Fortunately, the music, despite being far removed from Frisell's usual style, stands up well on its own. Or sometimes deliberately falls down, in an almost literal sense, if some of the slapstick-y endings are anything to go by. The sympathetic support of drummer Joey Baron and bassist Kermit Driscoll provide a canvas on which Frisell daubs splashes of acoustic and electric guitar, conveying variously the moods of jollity, pathos, humour and gleeful triumph one would expect of Keaton classics.  
★★★★ Andy Mabbett

## JERRY GIDDENS For Lydia (Sputnik Recordings - Import)

Deserting his West Coast base, the former leader of the Walking Wounded is

a Texas resident these days. He's got a new band as well, the Stoney White Punks. This short, 35 minutes, nine track set is composed of latter day California recordings, mixed with more recent studio outings at the legendary Loma Ranch complex in Fredricksburg, Tx. Between the outset and the final curtain call, Giddens powers his way through folk/rock tinged material concerning the L.A. freeways (Thin Veiled Line), public order and justice (Hannah and Burn It Down), love (Spanish Rain) and family (Precious Father). The latter song being a reply to the Bad Livers tune Pretty Daughter. And finally ... was the cover shot at Austin's two step-pin' palace, The Broken Spoke?

★★★ Arthur Wood

## GUTTERMOUTH Friendly People (Nitro)

Yet ANOTHER Californian punk outfit, and while perhaps not the best of the bunch, to be honest, I can't get enough of this high-octane, infectious, riff-stained punk rock. If there's one thing that let's Guttermouth down though, it's the kiddie-shock lyrics. Other than that it's ramalama rockin' all the way!

★★★★ Max

## THE HAMSTERS Route 666 (Rockin' Rodent Recordings)

Titles like Ain't Living Long Like This, Only Rock'N'Roll and The Blues On Their Own confirm that The Hamsters make little concession for hi-fi listening; they simply boogie on in fine fettle with great, great guitar playing well to the fore - except on the title track where they prove that they can create a splendid AOR sound without at any time endangering their balls. A pointer for future perhaps.

★★★★ Steve Morris

## ISAAC HAYES The Collection (Connoisseur Collection)

If soul music can be said to be a religion, then Isaac Hayes is Archbishop of Aural Sects ...

★★★★ Sam Mitchell

## HEAD LIKE A HOLE Flk Y'self Off Y'self (Noise)

Think of bands like Stabbing Westward, Tribe After Tribe and ultimately, Jane's Addiction and you start to notice a pattern of intelligence, clarity and above all, menace. Add New Zealand's HLAH to the list - they're multi-layered, sharp and scary. A lot of it's down to the in inventiveness of the rhythms. Whatever, FYOY is a gloriously gruesome montage of torn-up images. For those with no fear only.

★★★★ Max

## LUCY KAPLANSKY The Tide (Red House - Import)

If you were a cynical person, you might conclude that Lucy's album was Shawn Colvin's dry run for Cover Girl. Fact one, Colvin produced this debut disc for her long time singing buddy. Fact two, there's certainly a swathe of cover tunes here

penned by much admired songpoets such as Bill Morrissey, David Massengill, Tom Russell / Greg Trooper and Cliff Eberhardt plus a couple of homegrown products, Richard Thompson and Sting. Of course we shouldn't forget Lucy's contribution; a trio of autobiographically slanted tunes. The title cut charts the ebb and flow of her life, which runs hot, sometimes cold. Relationships are also explored in Somebody's Home, while Kaplansky's maternal instincts come to the fore in You Just Need A Home. Obviously a believer in shining knights and damsels in need, Robin Batteau's Guinevere and The Eyes Of My Beholder address those issues. There's nothing outlandishly new or breathtaking here. It's all fairly low key in fact, yet the bottom line is that it is a damned fine elixir.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

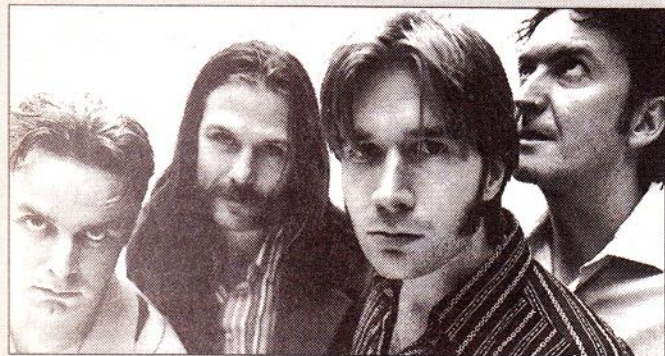
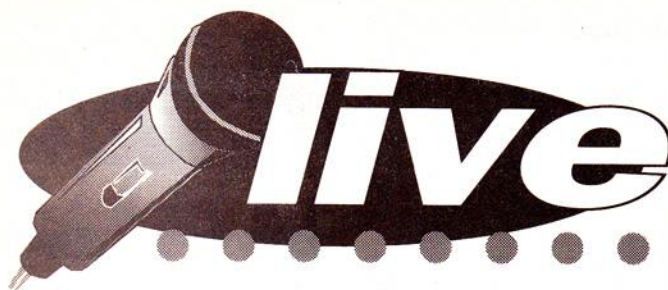
## PETE & MAURA KENNEDY River of Fallen Stars (Green Linnet / Direct Distribution)



The former Maura Boudreau, late of Austin's Delta Rays, went on to become backing vocalist in Nanci Griffith's Blue Moon Orchestra [circa the Other Voices, Other Rooms World Tour], while her hubby to be was the main picker in the band. So ... they got hitched. They formed a duo. They cut an album. And here's my two penny worth ... there's much made in the liner booklet regarding the influence of Irish melody and lyricism on their work. Apart from Richard Thompson's Wall of Death and the Tom Kimmel/Stam Lynch [one of Tom Petty's boys] collaboration House On Fire, the remaining eleven songs were co-written/written by Maura and Pete, occasionally with fellow scribes. There's little doubt that Kennedy is one of the best pickers and strummers on the face of the planet and this set gives full vent to his talent, with loadsa jangly Byrdsy guitars and he even dives into Turkish rhythms at one juncture. That apart, the problem with the end product boils down to a lack of lyrical bite in the self penned material. At turns precious and sometimes pretty thin, they have time on their side and may grow into a powerful force. Close, but no cigar this time ...

★★ Arthur Wood





## DEL AMITRI

**Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

I always feel like I'm back at college when I watch the Dels. Perhaps that's because they seem well at home in front of a crowd of largely cheerfully bevvied up lads. Or maybe it's because their classy songs fit student stereotypes so comfortably: lots of lyrics of introverted guilt and gloom, nicely packaged with a bit of knockabout rock and the odd singalong anthem. Mind you, the set is packed with 70s throwbacks - Iain Harvie's guitars go through Orange amps, and both he and Justin Currie sport improbably retro facial hair. That's before the Iggy Pop, Mötörhead and Undertones covers. Still, I'm not complaining. Del Amitri are getting better all the time, and they started out very good indeed. In the States, they're up to Platinum status. So I'm glad I can still see them, close up, at a stand up venue with drink in hand. I didn't like them at Symphony Hall - too formal - and I probably won't at the NEC. They're that kind of band, bless 'em. **Robin Valk**

## ROD MacDONALD

**The Red Lion Folk Club, Kings Heath, Birmingham**

What can you say. Two sets. A total of seventeen self penned tunes. A voice, an acoustic guitar and a harmonica rig. This was one of those magical nights. Hell, there were even four as yet unrecorded tunes. Me & Uncle Joe inspired by the time MacDonald spent on an Oglala Sioux reservation with the late Frank Fools Crow, the politically influenced Last Train To Pontiac and his paternal Scottish roots tribute Walk In The Highlands. Out In The Country, another back to my roots/coming of age influenced tune, gets my latest epic vote. Most folk remember their personal where, what and when in terms of receiving the news of John F. Kennedy's assassination. I could tell you almost to the minute, the date and place when I first heard another of Rod's epic songs The Way To Calvary. That's the mark of a great writer ... and with each succeeding UK tour, more and more folk fans are discovering that universal truth.

**Arthur Wood**

## BEASTIE BOYS / JON SPENSER BLUES EXPLOSION

**Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

Possibly the tour of the year by the now, officially recognised, 'Coolest Band On

The Planet'. Yeah, the B-Boys kicked up a storm when they were last here, but it's different now - no discerning music lover could question their credibility. Thus, this tour was sold out before the beginning of time and every show will have been attended by anyone who thought they were anyone. But first...

There was always the possibility that Jon Spenser Blues Explosion's fucked-up blues would throw a gloriously chipped spanner in the night's vibe, but the Blues Explosion are doing something very similar to the Beastie Boys - taking older musical forms, throttling them whilst paying them homage, and fusing them to ultra-hip, ultra-contemporary 'alternative' 'tude. I would say a respectable percentage wouldn't've known who the Blues Explosion were tonight, but by the end of their stark, orange-lit, jarring set, EVERYONE was a fan. "Than'yuhver'much," mumbled the Therman-infected Presley/Cave/Wolf-monster that is Jon Spenser as his band left me nearly wiped out.

Nearly. See, I'd secreted some 'reserve energy' about my person, because although dancing at gigs has kinda lost its appeal to me these days, this was an exception. If you don't dance to the Beastie Boys, you are the dweeby cousin you thought you never had. THIS hall was rammed with clued-up hipsters. We ALL danced. You want details, don't you? 'Fraid I can't give 'em - I was too busy groovin' to superfly '70s pimp-funk,

stompin' to bone-shatterin' hip-hop and pogoing to out-and-out punk rock. As were Yauch, Ad-Rock and Mike D, blastin' out golden oldies like Egg Raid On Mojo, through to the catchiest of NOW! anthems, Sure Shot. I caught snatches of double basses, bongoes, Chinese lanterns and flying keyboard players, but - and I know you'll forgive me for this - I was more interested in Gettin' Down than Takin' Notes. If you were there, you know what I'm talkin' about, if you weren't - I think you can guess. Get up earlier next time and make sure you get yourself a ticket. DON'T try tellin' me you didn't wanna go - you'd sell your SOUL to be a B-Boy. I know I would. If I had one to sell.

**Max**

## CYNDI LAUPER

**Symphony Hall, Birmingham**

The Symphony Hall is such an odd place for a gig - it's famed acoustics aside, the sit-down, refined atmosphere dampens any hope of this being a Rock'n'Roll event, no matter how many times Cyndi reminded us that's just what it was. And yet, despite this rarefied setting, there was something amateurish about it all - from the band's gear looking lost on stage, a tuppenny-ha'penny riser for Cyndi to run up and down on, the Spinal Tap-like curtain that got stuck half way through its unveiling process, and Cyndi herself - a kind of punky, crazy-coloured, down-at-heel Madonna.

But no question about it, once into her stride, she was the spirited, professional performer, with that distinctive, piercing Brooklyn-baby-doll voice. Out came the hits and a whole bunch of stuff that was lost on me, but which this strangely older audience (was it the venue or does Cyndi attract a more mature fan?) recognised instantly and responded politely to by gently clapping whilst remaining in their seats, watched over by sour-faced geriatric stewards. "They must be somebody's uncles!" quips Cyndi before sweet-talking them into letting her fans get up and come towards the stage. There's a big love between her and her people - a mutual trust, as demonstrated when she does a walkabout amongst them. No mob scenes here - they approach, nervously shake Cyndi's hand, then scamper away, while she skips and hops like some little girl in a large playground. Support act, David McAlmont joins Cyndi for a duet near the ends, and it's during these mournful, folkier moments that I hear something quite touching about Cyndi's craft. It's still not my kinda thing y'understand, but Cyndi seems genuine enough, her band makes nice enough sounds and - all things considered - this was a very pleasant evening. **Max**

## RACHEL'S BASEMENT

**Jug Of Ale, Birmingham**

I like my pop perverted. Good, catchy melodies, but with something 'off centre', whether lyrically or musically. Failing that, my pop must be well crafted by a fine songsmith and performed with marked enthusiasm. Step right up, Rachel's Basement. Jarring Beatles and mod-60s influences aside, Rachel's Base-

ment demonstrate the kind of good feelin' quality talent and originality that shows up bands like Oasis and Blur for what they really are - remarkably average. The Basement could strut cockily around the charts given half the chance and no-one would dare ask them why they were there. Me, I was swayed by Tariq's superb guitar playing during Midnight Rolls Again, the bluesy-folky (and quite Skynyrd-y in a way) Take Me Over and the groove-funk of Top Of The Edge. Oh, and frontman, Daniel's ease in the limelight, energy injection and quiet confidence in the knowledge that it won't be long before he has a complete lack of personal privacy.

**Max**

## CARTER USM / SALAD

**Que Club, Birmingham**

Salad, I've always thought, were no more than a no-hope indie band fronted by an MTV babe. Whereas, in fact, they are an inventive quartet with some depth and a gutsy/breathy vocalist in Marijane. A lot more to 'em than their rather lacklustre recordings. Odd moments reminded me of early P.J. Harvey.

Slap my wrists if y'like, but I left half an hour into Carter's one-dimensional, cartoon, early '80s-sounding punk rock. I know EXACTLY what the rest of the set would've been like: one-dimensional, cartoon (etc.).

Bored, bored, bored, bored, BORED!

**Max**

## (The Artist They Used To Call All Sorts Of Things, But Who They Still Call) PRINCE (Despite His Best Efforts)

**NEC Birmingham**

No support acts, but you can catch just about all his banned New Gold Experience album on the video screen before he starts. I can see why he's so upset with Warners. The music is great, and he looks better than ever. And that's before the show. The set is amazing. Sensational lighting, brilliantly programmed. But then it all starts to go downhill. Prince (I'm tired of this alias stuff) is in a bad mood. He swears at someone - audience or band, I'm not sure; he spends a fair amount of time off stage; as the set wears on he spends more and more time going through the motions. The PA doesn't help either - muddy and bass heavy - and it definitely hinders communication on the raps. No question that his subject matter is getting pavier, though. Which might be OK if he wasn't feeling so petulant - I'd just like a bit of enthusiasm. He wraps it all up after about two hours. And he thanks us for letting him be himself. All of which is fine and dandy, but doesn't this presuppose a bit of inter-reaction between performer and audience?

Still you could always get your Symbol condom on the way out - only £2.00 each. And Prince thinks he's the one being shafted.

**Robin Valk**