

**IT'S BEEN A WHOLE
LOT EASIER SINCE ...**

**MARIA
McKEE**

**DEMOS
ALBUMS
VIDEOS**

**WIN
MILLER
DRAFT
BEER &
EDSON
CIDER**

**FREE
PHOENIX
TICKETS**

**NUMBER 151
JULY 1993**



THE DOCS HIT TOWN
The Spin Doctors Write A Prescription

MARC COHN
Talks To Mike Davies

JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY

Life's A Dance

TRACY LAWRENCE

Alibis (both Atlantic)
Atlantic may be regarded as an R&B and soul haven but the success of Garth Brooks in particular and the growth of country in all of urban America means that all labels need their contenders.

Atlantic are no exception and Montgomery and Lawrence have the hats and clean cut images to take on Brooks. What they don't have is his character or magic. Both albums are just fine; Montgomery's has the best songs and the more country feel but it's a marginal thing as Lawrence's set includes a couple of commercial cuts.

What is common to both is the scrubbed clean production values, the kind that were confined to FM rock until recently and which are threatening the individuality of country music. Both guys are talented but as you see if you catch CMT, such talent is wall to wall and barely distinguishable from one another.

For the moment it's Montgomery's set I'll play with 'Beer And Bones' and 'Life's A Dance' rising well above the ordinary.

Steve Morris



JOHN MICHAEL MONTGOMERY
— ANOTHER SQUEAKY
CLEAN COWBOY

JIMMY BARNES

Heat (Mushroom)

Australia's Springsteen they say. Hardly. Barnes simply doesn't have material in that league. Now if you throw names like Bob Seger or Bryan Adams into the equation you'll get nearer the truth.

See, Barnes is a performer on an epic scale and that feeling screams off the CD. The man needs an NEC stage from which to hammer home his proficient rock/n'n cocktail.

Whether this is the album to buy his ticket I'm not sure; probably needs to haul his band around the Civic Hall circuit to build an audience. Indeed I suspect it's wise to suspend the final sentence on Barnes until a live show has been evidenced.

Steve Morris

MARY COUGHLAN

Love For Sale (Demon)

A dozen gems live at The Mean Fiddler that amply illustrate how good a vocalist Coughlan is. And how hard to pin down. Often filed under folk, this set has a jazz feeling without being jazz and the song selection taking in work by Sting, Costello, Cole Porter and the lady herself helps defy the categorization. And a cover of 'These Boots Are Made For Walking' throws her oft forgotten humour into the equation.

The lady once told me that she was merely a singer; on this showing one of the very best.

Steve Morris

BUTCH HANCOCK

Own The Way Over Here

(Sugarhill/Topic)

Another sampling from the Lubbock Laureate's vast back catalogue. There's something wilful about Hancock's career sense for here we have a man

capable of standing alongside Dylan as a writer and performer and yet he confines himself to local Texas releases and barrages of cassette issues for fans only. Here we have an eleven track glimpse into the catalogue on what I believe is only his third UK release. It's the usual blend of dry wit, pointed observation and almost surreal reflection.

Hancock is a fine writer and at his most disciplined a fine tunesmith who deserves a wider audience and with this being so readily available you can find out why.

Steve Morris

PROGRESSION

It's About Time

(United Artists / Own Label LP)

Reggae isn't what it used to be but fortunately Wolverhampton's Progression are.

They specialise in a reggae that's firmly rooted in a time when Bob Marley was King and Steel Pulse were in their commercial prime. That's to say, they specialise in those limpid, sensual, natural rhythms driven by supple drum and bass interplay topped with infectious melodies and plush harmonies.

That's not to suggest that Progression belie their name by behaving in a retro fashion; at times the rhythm section adds the beefier feel of the nineties and whilst the lyrical concerns may be the traditional humanitarian and spiritual ones they're delivered with a currency far removed from nostalgia.

The production, by Gavin Monaghan at W/Ton's highly regarded Magic Garden is fittingly clean and crisp lacking only the polish that major deal money would bring. The band is tight, obviously well rehearsed (a credit to the man Dread Lester suggests time spent wisely at Sam Sharp's) and well skilled.

If real reggae was an A&R shopping lists Progression would be contenders, meanwhile they'll continue building their own admirable organisation and slaying crowds wherever they appear if the live show's as good as this album.

If you want to check 'em out call 0902 312168.

Steve Morris

PATTI SCIALFA

Rumble Doll (Columbia)

It's the debut album from Mrs Boss and it's not the Linda McCartney experience that might be feared. She may not have endeared herself to Springsteen fans when she split up the stage partnership with the Big Man, but despite a slight nasal intonation the girl can sing. Heartbreaker Mike Campbell's production helps a lot but beyond that there's definite potency at work although it's hard not to point out, that while a certain Italian-American flavour rings through (à la Mink DeVille) the majority of the songs (which she wrote it says here, Mr S's only contribution being keyboard and guitar on two numbers) bear a not unfamiliar echo of her hubby's romantic blue collar ballads.

Truth to tell though, they're actually damn fine numbers, strong on hook, melody and lyric. In fact given 'Come Tomorrow', 'Big Black Heaven', 'Love's Glory' and the outstanding title track, maybe Bruce should let her write his next album too.

Mike Davies

THE POSIES

Frosting On The Beater

(Geffen)

Their debut album marked them out as one of the most promising of America's new wave of hard-edged shimmering pop guitar bands, compared favourably to a tougher breed of Hollies. Here the louche vocals still cut it but clearly their masters have ordered them back to Seattle and roped in passé grunge doctor Don Fleming to do some garage work. Whatever melodies might have been there at the birth are now disguised by insistent drum beating and slabs of formless but noisy guitars. The unfortunate result is that a bunch of good songs now wander like haunted ghosts in the limbo between The Raspberries and The Replacements.

Mike Davies

SUICIDAL TENDENCIES

Still Cyco After All These Years

(Epic)

Those fine purveyors of hardcore skate punk offer this collection of re-recorded classics and new songs. A wild-eyed, teeth-clenched, mosh-inducing assault that simply never lets up. No-one thrashing around in this genre does it better than S.T. 15 chainsaw tracks (clocking in at 37 minutes - I just love albums like that!), including my faves, the superbly gross, 'I Saw Your Mommy' and probably the monarch of all alienated youth anthems, 'Institutionalized'. Contender for album of the year in my books, as I'm sure their gig - live wise - at the Wulfun on the 19th will be.

Max

WALTER TROUT BAND

Live - No More Fish Jokes

(Provogue)

Trout as he should be. After the farago of the last album's AOR pretensions this is just seventy plus minutes of live action; long guitar fuelled workouts that actually ignite.

And that says it all. Trout may not be the most accomplished blues axeman but he has a feel for the form and a rock steady band that provides a solid platform for his sonic wanderings.

This I'm sure, is the albums his fans wanted and the one that could persuade waverers. Herring is believing.

Steve Morris

soundbites

SUN / Jam House Wah / (G.U.N)

Apparently German and obviously noisy, Sun are an anonymous metal headache whose attacks on 'Like A Rolling Stone' and 'Spanish Castle Magic' are criminal. SM

VARIOUS / Instruments / (Hannibal)

li you can take Satie played on pedal steel and Bulgarian wedding orchestras and blues slide guitar, then this vocal free virtuoso sixteen track box of delights is for you. SM

ROBIN GREENSTEIN / Slow Burn / (Brambus)

'New York Blues', first track up, and you'd wonder why Robin's been described as a folkie. From the following 'Me And My Daydreams' through to the closing standard 'Bye Bye Blackbird' you find out why; then you begin to wonder about the inclusion of the opening cut. AW

OUCH / Life Goes On / (Caveil)

Records) Would be Shoes / Rembrandts / Stories / Segarini/ Beatles poppers forgetting that inspiration is rather more vital than a simple story board. SM

BARRY WHITE / Dedicated / Change/

(both Southbound-Ace) From White's early eighties chart drought period 'Change' finds him dabbling with synths whilst 'Dedicated' teams him with arranger Gene Page - his usual accomplice. The songs don't have the bite of the familiar, yet all of the love god's hallmarks are on view. SM

VARIOUS / Dub Or Die / (ROIR-)

Danceteria) Excellent baker's dozen dubs from Prince Far I, Black Uhuru, Lee Perry, The Observer and other mix-masters from an age when the rhythms with a loose limbed swagger. Play loud 'n' learn. SM

GENE LOVES JEZEBEL / Heavenly

Bodies / (Arista) The most remarkable thing here is that the goths of old are now sharing management with Rod Stewart! Otherwise it's an uneventful if competent set with several tracks that could provide a solid payday should someone see soundtrack potential à la P. Furs. SM

LES NEGREGES VERTES / 10

Remixes / (Delabel-Virgin) Les Negresses were adopting and adapting world rhythms when to do so was novelty rather than hip. These sympathetic remixes, from William Orbit, Norman Cook and Massive Attack among others, should find Les Negresses a warmer welcome than on their initial call. SM

VARIOUS / Tighten Up Vols. 5 & 6

(Trojan) Hell! I remember many a seventies party reverberating to the loud sounds of these two albums; Clancy Eccles' 'Rod Of Correction', Dennis Alcapone's 'Ripe Cherry' (the DJ version of the UB covered 'Cherry Oh Baby') and The Cimarons' 'Struggling Man' especially. I also remember the low quality pressings of the originals; well with the two albums now on one CD, nostalgia never sounded so sweet. SM

GEORGE STRAIT / Pure Country /

(MCA) Country's Mr. Clean with the soundtrack to his movie debut which against the odds for such things stands up as one of his best recent efforts. Songs from the like of Eric Kaz, Jim Lauderdale and Glenn Frey given life by crack session men and the commercial clout of a Tony Brown production help of course but Strait's faultless vocals are the heart. SM

JONATHAN KING / The Many Faces

Of ... / (Music Club) A cheap'n'cheerful reissue for Mr. Irritating's mainly pseudonymous cheap'n'cheerful hits. Eighteen of 'em! Crap or kitsch? Whatever, King's unique ability to seize the moment and hit the pop pulse is arguably the quintessence of the genre. SM

10cc / The Best Of The Early Years /

(Music Club) A bargain priced twenty track necessity. The current manifestation of the band may be a toothless beast but don't let that blind you to this offering for here lies the roots of Jellyfish: Pop with wit and talons. SM

HEIDI BERRY / Heidi Berry / (4AD)

Singer-songwriter of introspective late 60s English folk-rock persuasion with shades of Sandy Denny and effective use of zither, cello, and pedal steel. Hauntingly sung and songs like 'Darling Companion' and 'One-String Violin' don't pale in the shade of her cover of 'Heart Like A Wheel'. MD

B.J. COLE / Transparent Music /

(Hannibal) Pedal Steel virtuoso Cole's album has been around since '89 but re-promotion is the game since one cut found new life selling lager. It's an unusual set combining original tunes with Satie, Ravel and Debussy for pedal steel. Oddly compelling. SM

VARIOUS / Cool Cuts / (Old Gold)

Lining up Courtney Pine, Grover Washington and Will Downing alongside John Coltrane, Earl Klugh and Gil Scott Heron demonstrates that not all jazz funk has to be as low alcohol as Kenny G. SM

VARIOUS / Swing Out / (Old Gold)

The basic concept seems to be nostalgia for the Wag Club and the early eighties yuppie soundtrack with Matt Bianco, Style Council, Swing Out Sister, Working Week and Carmel. So where does Martin Stephenson fit in? And, er, Howard Jones! SM

MATT KEATING / Tell It To Yourself /

(Alias) Roots country tinged guitar pop and melancholic American bedsit ballads mark Keating as a name to watch in the same league as Marshall Crenshaw, Jules Shear, and Peter Case. MD

VARIOUS / The Alligator 20th

Anniversary Tour / (Alligator) A budget double of blistering blues with hot fretting from Lonnie Brooks (reaching the parts ...), Elvin Bishop and Lif Ed's Blues Imperials and gospel painted shouting from Katie Webster and Koko Taylor. One helluva atmosphere is captured here. SM

DONALD FAGEN

Kamakiriad

(Reprise)

Steely Don returns having taken a considered eleven years to come up with forty odd minutes of music. This would have been cause for mirth were it not for the fact that Fagen, with long time cohort Walter Becker in the producer's chair, has crafted eight tracks that are of such a high and unique quality that they will happily satisfy well into the next century. Which is just as well given our hero's work rate.

Steve Morris



BABES IN TOYLAND / Painkiller /

(Southern) Something of a time filler this with a mere four new open wound songs, a re-recorded 'He's My Thing' and most of Fontanelle live at CBGBs in all its raw flesh splendour. MD

LEADBELLY / The Very Best Of /

(Music Club) Leadbelly's potent 30s and 40s blend of folk and blues cast a shadow on music that is still present today in work as diverse as Clapton and Springsteen. This well annotated twenty track budget collection provides an unmissable chance to explore that influence and understand the legend. Without doubt one of the cornerstones of all classic American roots rock. SM

KATE & ANNA MCGARRIGLE / 1st +

Dancer With Bruised Knees / (Hannibal) Long awaited CD reissue of the Canadian sisters' brilliant first two albums, dripping with such classic jewels as 'Kitty Come Home', 'Go Leave', 'Talk To Me Of Mendocino' and, of course, 'Heart Like A Wheel'. Unliveable without! MD

POLYPHEMUS / Scrapbook of

Madness / (Beggars Banquet) A garage pop and harmonies duod seeking to hide their candles under a cloak of 90s indie art college sonic experimentation. At their best when they're just being California prom teens. MD

MORPHINE / Good / (Rykodisc)

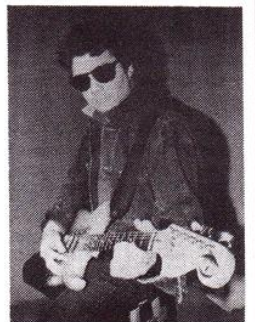
Sparse, moody and heavily Morrison influenced shades of poetic R&B cool from a 'goth jazz' trio who amply live up to their narcotic name and comparisons with the likes of Messrs Cave and Waits. MD

PAW / Dragline / (A&M) A cross

between REM and Nirvana and touted as the next big grunge scene thing. An excess of raw, howling noise and churning guitar noise perhaps but no denying the latent melodies or the potency of the lyrics. This paw swipes hard. MD

STEVE MILLER / Wide River /

(Polydor) First new material for five years and the likes of 'Horse And Rider', 'Perfect World' and 'Wide River' show him firmly back on consummate 'Jet Airliner' / 'Swingtown' form of effortlessly melodic R&B choogle and killer harmonies. As the ads say, it's Miller time again. MD



STEVE MILLER