

BRUM

55p

the midlands music monthly and more!

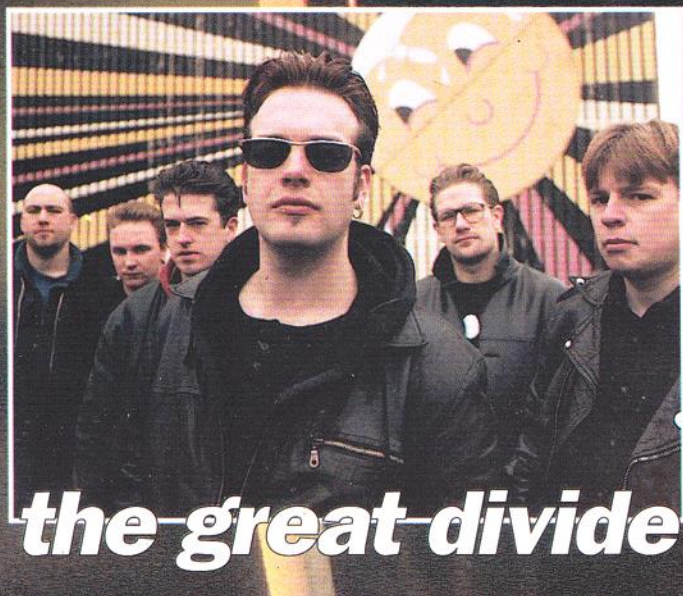
BEAT

march 1995

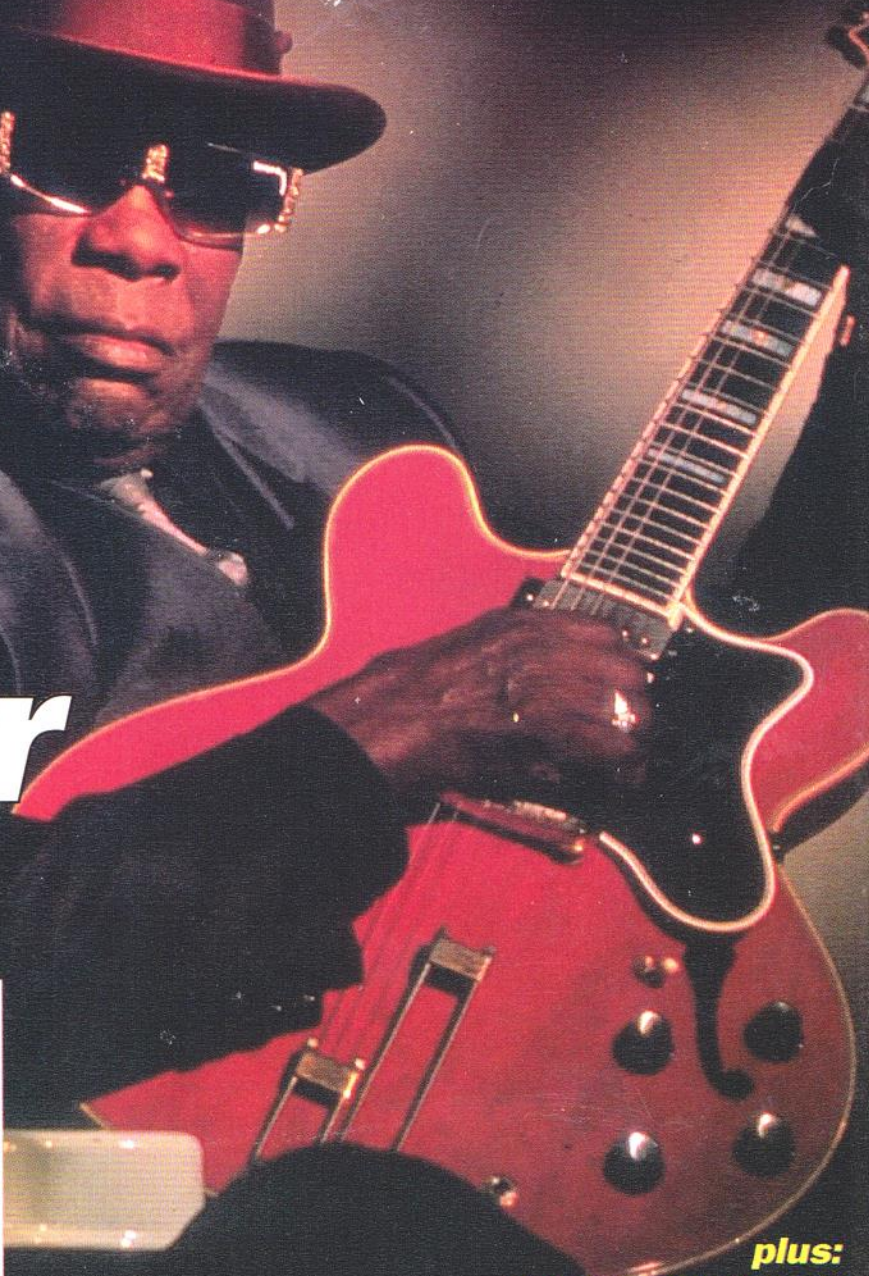
issue 169

hooker

the blues legend talks to
brum beat



the great divide



plus:
the human league
rachel's basement
honesty
tanita tikaram

the gig guide... news... reviews...
demos... opinion

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

BLYTH POWER

Paradise Razed
(Downward Spiral)



Back on The Guns Of Castle Cary vintage form after the unmemorable Pastor Skull, Josef Porter's anarcho-folkies prove they can still outlog any Leveller or Tansad when they mood arises. Fiddles are absent but fuelled by chugging guitars, pumping keyboards, Porter's rattling drumming and West Country vocals, and the odd accordion, the Olde English influences shine as bright as ever as do the highly literate, quasi medieval, richly metaphorical (and frequently historical) songs loosely about getting old and conventional (Bacchus On The Wagon), less than chivalrous knights of old (Ghilbert De Haace), false hearts (Rowan's Riding, Stonehaven), the church (Milton's Schemes), Joan of Arc (Burning Joan), ghostly maidens (Signalman White) and much more. They'll probably never catch the popular imagination, but of course they said that about the Peasant's Revolt and the Poll Tax protesters too.

★★★★ Mike Davies

CARDINAL

Cardinal (Dedication)

An Australian / American rainy day shoeegazing duo of baroque folk pop predisposition (nice touches of harpsichord and twanging bass, trumpets and semi acoustic guitars) that along with Richard Davies wearily bruised ennuie coloured vocals evokes thoughts of Peter Hammill and early Bowie (Though Singing To The Sunshine's a dead ringer for Only Love Can Break Your Heart style breathy Neil Young).

Wistful and introspective, songs like Angel Darling, If You Believe In Christmas Trees and Last Poems won't change the wallpaper in your bedsit, but it will irradiate it with a nicer glow.

★★★★ Mike Davies

DEANA CARTER

Did I Shave My Legs For This?
(Patriot)

She looks a bit like a young Kim Carnes she sounds somewhere between Parton and Wynette and she's obviously being marketed to the Trisha Yearwood audience, Carter's the new y'all come girl on the contemporary country block and while the album's a confident (if over session polished) debut its tendency to dissolve into middle of the road soft Nashville and a certain slackness in the lyrical department (does country really need another song about a departed daddy) also shows there's still work to do. Letting go/not letting go, leaving/being left provide most of the reflective subject matter for the likes of I Can't Shake You, Graffiti Bridge, Turn Those Wheels Around and We Share A Wall, but while pleasant they're also rather unmemorable. The title track's slant on domestic drudgery and unappreciative partners shows she's capable of more inspired material (a new track performed at the recent media showcase confirms matters), so while this is worth noting, it's what comes next that you should be listening out for.

★★★★ Mike Davies

JOHNNY CASH

Bitter Tears / Blood, Sweat And Tears / Now, There Was A Song
(Columbia Legacy)

What a difference signing with Rick Rubin makes! Columbia, the label that dropped the country icon a decade or so back, have seemingly decided to plunder the vaults with some intelligence. These albums, from 1964, 1963 and 1960 respectively, actually complement last year's exceptional American Recordings rather well, emphasising Cash's lineage to Springsteen and Dylan rather than Kenny Rogers and Boxcar Willie. Bitter Tears is song cycle about American Indian life - not the myth but the brutal reality. Blood, Sweat And Tears is an album of work songs on which the sweat, sinew and muscle shine whilst Now ... could be the man's Pin - Ups with songs from

George Jones, Hank Williams, Bob Wills and more getting the inimitable Cash treatment.

★★★★ / ★★★ / ★★ Steve Morris

DEBBIE CASSELL

Angel In Labour
(Mauve Records)

Attractive, literate and melodic folk pop from the stable that brought us Jay Fisher and Rafa Russo. Good stuff it is too but I guess you'll have to search it out just to hear it. Radio, by and large, seems allergic to such charming sounds.

★★★ Steve Morris

THE CHURCH

Almost Yesterday 1981 - 1990
(Raven / Direct Distribution)

We've already been blessed by a couple of Church compilations. First, there was the double set Hindsight followed by the rarities on A Quick Smoke At Spot's. Kind of raises the question, Do we need another? I suppose it all hinges on your jangly Rickenbacker tolerance level. The Church are one of those bands who have made a career out of the inclusion of non-album tracks on the B-side of their singles. In the rarity area, there's a couple included here. The other fifteen cuts span the years from their debut Australian set Of Skins & Hearts [aka The Church in the UK and US] up to Gold Afternoon Fix from the opening year of this decade. Long a sucker for repetition and Steve Kilbey's obscurist lyrics, I can't help but award 9 points out of 10, for this attempt to gather together the hits that never were, should have been ...

★★★★ Arthur Wood

BARRY DRANSFIELD

Be Your Own Man (Rhannon)

The admirable Dransfield seems to have been around forever, adding his voice to every folk revival in living memory. Here he offers a song decrying the disappearing fishing industry, a stout John Barleycorn, a little heard Bert Jansch tune and an early Dave Stewart composition. Traditional folk as a living, all embracing thing no less. Sadly it oft seems that such 'roots' offerings are destined to be sidelined in the rush to demonstrate that said genre is all about obscure Madagascan quadrilles or whatever.

★★★ Steve Morris

DRUGSTORE

Drugstore (Go Discs)

Close your eyes and try and conjure up what the Jesus and Mary Chain might sound like if they were fronted by a wasted Melanie, or a younger stoned Marianne Faithfull. OK, Open them up and here they are. Narcotic storms of guitar brush alongside lapping acoustic waves as Brazilian Isabel Monteiro's vocals (all Greenwich Village psychedelia) curl around like caressing sweet smoke. Aside from the two recent singles, the peachy sonic pill of Nectarine and Solitary Party's rumbling acid come on, there's enough sweet candy here to bliss you through all tomorrow's parties. A musical cocktail of honey and opium (it's not just the deep twanging guitar on Favourite Sinner that suggests a Poppy Family for the 90s), it positively drips jewels of liquid pop, none more so than the unspeakably wonderful opening epic Speaker 12. Get your prescription filled here before they make them illegal.

★★★★ Mike Davies

ANNE DUDLEY

Ancient and Modern (Echo)

Whether you know Dudley for her pop work (with the Art Of Noise and Jaz Coleman or for Frankie Goes To Hollywood, Annie Lennox and a host of others) or her soundtracks (Crying Game, Buster and, recently, Kavanagh QC-which should be released ASAP), you might be surprised by this disc. Then again, if you're a classical purist, it might drive you nuts (and serve you right, too!), for Dudley has recorded a mixture of her own classically-inspired new writings, arrangements and 'interpretations', which bastardise their source much more than anything which could be labelled an arrangement. For instance, only traces of anything recognisable remain in her Holly And The Ivy, and the same can be said of Bach's Three Chorales in Common Time. On the other hand, the new compositions, Communion and Veni Sancte Spiritus, could easily pass as truly aged tunes. This is, in part, due to her use of top classical session players and a renowned choir which could not be credited for tiresome contractual reasons (suffice to say, they stand four square at the leading edge of their profession). While some may see this album as a cynical marketing ploy, there are much easier

country matters

RICKY VAN SHELTON may wear a large hat but both he and his music are from a tougher mould than the current breed of pop poodles who've appropriated the stetson as a badge of commercial convenience. Love And Honour (Columbia) ★★ is a muscular affair drawing on material by Merle Haggard, Pat McLaughlin and Kathy Louvin - yes one of those Louvins - among others. Duet albums may seem to be a country contractual obligation but TAMMY WYNETTE's Without Walls (Epic) ★ plumbs new depths. Elton John and Cliff Richard may seem like odd partners but Sting cooing Every Breath You Take with the lady is risible. Only Lyle Lovett escapes unscathed. Tammy genuinely sounded better partnering The KLF. JAMES HOUSE Days Gone By (Epic) ★★ benefits from having the fine vocalist contributing to the writing. There's a flow that is often missing from the production line albums out of Nashville these days. It may be clean enough for the mainstream but House retains a barroom edge that keeps the saccharin at bay. ARCHER PARK We Got A lot In Common ((Atlantic) are a prefabricated duo seeking to cash in on the Brooks and Dunn phenomenon. It sounds like it too; the songs are transparently calculated and the sound is stale. TRACY LAWRENCE I See It Now (Atlantic) ★★ is another made to measure set. Sentiment laden titles like If The World Had A Front Porch and God Made My Woman On A Good Day are a dead give-away. It's beautifully produced and superficially attractive though ultimately it can only be the soundtrack to America's Republican backlash. LARRY STEWART Heart Like A Hurricane (Columbia) ★★ storms in with an irresistible guitar riff and then piles harmonies onto killer hooks; ideal road trip soundtrack stuff. Sure it gets syrupy at times but there's enough guitar to compensate and anyone putting the steels of Dan Dugmore and Paul Franklin onto one track must be worth a listen. LITTLE TEXAS Kick A Little (Warner Brothers) ★★ have toughened up for their third album. The title track actually does - in Nashville terms. It's country rock circa '74 given a production airbrush - and a perm. It may lack any hint of originality but of its kind, it's rather good. THE BLUE-HEARTS Lullaby For The Lost (Big Cactus Records) may hail from Brighton rather than Nashville or Austin but they sound rather more immersed in the music's heritage than the former's output, if lacking in the verve of the latter's. It's only the production confidence that robs this album of a higher rating; the songs are good, the playing great and if some solo vocals are lacking in authority the harmonies drive things along. Worth searching out.

Steve Morris

ways to make a quick buck, and Dudley's refusal to follow either these or conventional boundaries is to be applauded.

★★★★ Andy Mabbett

BOB DYLAN

Blonde On Blonde (Columbia Mastersound)

Dylan at one of his many peaks with the whimsy of Rainy Day Women sitting cheek by jowl with the stately One Of Us Must Know, the classic Just Like A Woman, the rollicking Most Likely You Go Your Way and the epic narrative genius of Sad Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands. And it's all stunningly remastered and quite rightly gold plated.

★★★★★ Steve Morris

KAREN FINLEY

A Certain Level Of Denial (Ryko)

Finley is a confrontational San Franciscan multi-medium artist and ...Denial is a powerful, disturbing, intense selection of her spoken-word, semi-poetic monologues, dealing - amongst other topics - with AIDS, homophobia and sexism. Coming complete with an accompanying graphic booklet, ...Denial is not for the faint-hearted, but it IS important. EVERYONE should hear this. I'll bet her live shows are jaw-dropping affairs.

★★★★ Max

GIANT SAND

Glum (Dedicated)

Some 17 albums down the line and Howe Gelb's Arizona mesa rock outfit's still no less idiosyncratic in his eclectic approach to screeching Neil Young grungey guitar, fractured peyote visions of the darkland desert, or wasted throaty warbles through lyrics about bitter, soul scouring relationships and general misery. Musically it's rarely any easier. Yer Ropes is all wistful melodic melancholy but then 1 Helvakowboy Song takes a wild trip from guitar distortion to improv cheesy jazz organ and fiddle (courtesy Chris Cacavas/Lisa Germano), Painted Bird is art rock feedback amp crushing complete with Victoria Williams being suitably weird in the final coda. And it all winds up with the bizarre experimentalism of having his young daughter sing hideously out of tune through her own Bird Song before the late Pappy Allen turns Hank's I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry into a lilting backporch cocktail lounge number. The Frank Zappa of cactus rock anyone?

★★★ Mike Davies

BOB GIBSON

Makin' A Mess: Bob Gibson sings Shel Silverstein (Asylum Import)

This Chicago based Bob was a king in the field of folk, way before the Minnesota Kid hit Greenwich Village. Over five decades, he's recorded for major labels such as Elektra and Capitol, minors such as Hogeys and Mountain Railroad. In the twilight of his years, Bob is rightfully back in the limelight, pitchin'

tunes from his long-time pal, Shel Silverstein. Bob n' Shel co-penned the lyrically reflective opening cut, Stops Along The Way. Folk stalwarts way back in the fifties, Oscar Brand, Peter Yarrow, Ed McCurdy and Glen Yarbrough raise their voices in harmony, alongside country greats such as Emmylou Harris and John Hartford. They're aided and abetted instrumentally by Nashville hit pickers such as Sam Bush and Kenny Malone. In the tenderness stakes there's Whistlers & Jugglers, while Silverstein, long a purveyor of lyrical irreverence nukes some nineties sacred cows in Nothin's Real Anymore and The Man Who Turns The Damn Thing Off and On. For out and out craziness, try Killed By A Coconut. The definition of Makin' A Mess, serious fun from a folk music legend.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

GRIM SKUNK

Grim Skunk (Cargo)

Montreal's Grim Skunk come on like a supercharged version of Monster Magnet, Soundgarden and Deep Purple (Joe Evil's - great name, huh? - Hammond organ dabbling is very Jon Lord) for the first four tracks, then suddenly throw a mad ska spanner in the works in the shape of Martha! Weird! Texas Cult Song also has a US West Coast punk feel to it, so we're not exactly short of styles here! What with this and Malhavoc, all eyes on Canada!

★★★ Max

KRISTEN HALL

Real Life Stuff (Daemon - Sky / Direct Distribution)

The title of this set and the guest presence of Indigo Girl Emily on a couple of tracks should neatly pigeon hole this one. Let me just add that Hall's intelligent melodic songs actually deserve more than the bedsit feminist blues taint of that opening shot and that this album - a much sparser affair than her recent, and excellent Be Careful What You Wish For set on Windham Hill's High Street imprint - is a welcome addition to the fertile ranks of women singer writers.

★★★ Steve Morris

HAMILTON POOL

Return To Zero (Watermelon / Direct Distribution)

Musically, this Austin, Texas trio is composed of boys from 'out of town'. There's our own Lincolnshire lad Iain Matthews, Mark Hallman (proprietor of Congress House Studio) and long-time New York resident, Michael Fracasso. During the last decade and a half, they've [separately] decided to settle in this fertile haven for songwriters. Magnetic fields, ley lines, who can tell? Although they've made a couple of local club appearances, Return To Zero signals their tilt at the home/international market. In this thirteen song set, it's hard to figure out the reason[s] for recutting Fracasso's Apple Pie and One That Got Away, from his 1993 Dejadisc release Love & Trust. Excusing that minor gripe, there's little else you can fault on this punchy set, which skillfully

harnesses the accomplished writing talents of the participants. Hallmarked [Note to Heinz G - neat twist, huh!] by high quality harmonies and songs, personal favourites include Matthews' Shadowbox and London Girl, Fracasso's [Holly-esque vocal style] on Eye On The Road plus Backstreet Girl, and Second Hand Love from Hallman. Return to zero? Totally drawn from infinity.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

HOOTIE & THE BLOWFISH

Cracked Rear View (Atlantic)

Danny Baker may have minimised the parallel when he compared his TV show debut of Hootie & The Blowfish to Ed Sullivan's showcasing of The Beatles to the USA in the early sixties and truly the band is no Beatles. But Baker had every right to be chuffed, this is a great album; solid songs, great playing and in Hootie's vocals - actually the province of one Darius Rucker - a great smoky voice that recalls early Richie Havens given a pop gloss.

Certainly the widely influenced group sound - R&B and gospel rub shoulders with classic pop - recalls many great moments but the final blending is so damn good that any lack of massive success for the band is inconceivable. Strange then that the record company were only sending out preview tapes when the HMV megastore in Brum was stuffed with apparently in demand import CDs - a finger having difficulty in occasioning pulse contact it seems.

★★★★★ Steve Morris

JASON AND THE SCORCHERS

A Blazing Grace (Mammoth)

After a five year gap and a neglected solo album by Jason Ringenberg, this is a surprise but welcome reunion by the original line up. Sounding like they never went away (which, as anyone who remembers the debut album Lost And Found, is recommendation in itself) it crashes through revved up rocking rebel country and tearful beer hall ballad (Where Bridges Never Burn) with a vengeance, songs bearing testament to heartbreaks, hangersovers and Ringenberg's contrasting visions of the apocalyptic United States of Insanity (Hell's Gates) and a belief in the honest backbone of the good old American Southern Boy (American Legion Party). And in the tradition of their cover of Lost Highway, this comes complete with a furious punked up version of Take Me Home Country Roads. Rip it up country that can wither a Garth Brooks fan at 100 paces.

★★★ Mike Davies

BILLY JOEL

52nd Street (Columbia Mastersound)

1978's 52nd Street seems a strange choice for state of the art gold disc reissue - there are better Joel works available, The Nylon Curtain, for example. Maybe the lead trio of Big Shot, Honesty and My Life are better customer snares.

★★★ Sam Mitchell

ALAN STIVELL

**Harpe Celtique / Reflets /
Chemins De Terre / E Lan-
gonned / Terre Des Vivants
(all Dreyfus / Direct Distribution)**

It was Chemins De Terre [★★★★] (issued in the UK at the time as From Celtic Roots) that persuaded myself and several college cronies that navigating the Pennines in a VW Microbus (very Alice's Restaurant) to witness Stivell's great early seventies band at Manchester's Free Trade Hall was indeed a compulsory adventure. That gig still burns in the memory bank as one of life's finest. The album too remains fresh with Stivell's Breton folk rock at its stirring commercial pinnacle. The following set, E Langued [★★★★] would today merit an 'unplugged' categorisation for its wooden tabled, cider soaked yet proudly dignified exploration of Breton roots. Terre Des Vivants [★★★★] dates from the early eighties and finds Stivell's folk rock taking what can only be called a progressive turn. It is however some distance from the sterility of Runrig's handling of a similar area; there's a folk heart beating here.

Reflets [★★★★] precedes the folk rock arena filling days being, to use a Steeleye Span analogy, Parcel Of Rogues to Chemins' Now We Are Six. The previously unissued in the UK Harpe Celtique [★★] is for addicts, being the teenage Stivell, still using the family name Cochevelou, playing traditional pieces on solo harp; a fascinating insight to his developing style.

As for fears that you won't understand French folk, fear not, neither do the French - this is Breton folk, sung in that language. It's like Welsh to the English. But the emotional sub text is so clear only a complete clot would fail to be moved.

Now if someone will put 1979's 3rd Live International Tour - Tro Ar Bed onto CD, we'll have a full set at last.

Steve Morris

SUGAR BLUE

Blue Blazes (Line)

The blues harp man is perhaps best known for adding his suck'n'blow to The Stones' Miss You and, guess what ... track three is that song. Pretty lame it is too sounding like a local blues band trying to funk it up for no apparent reason. And that typifies this set. Whilst the harmonica stylings are top drawer, the band could be one of a million part time R&B aggregations that fuel star fantasies on pub and club platforms world-wide.

★★ Sam Mitchell

TOTO

IV (Columbia Mastersound)

Rosanna, Africa and state of the art AOR production techniques rendered magisterial with a little 20 bit remaster-

ing and gold plating. If you want to prove how good your hi-fi is - this is the disc.

★★★ Steve Morris

SYLVIA TYSON

Gypsy Cadillac (Round Tower)

This previously crept out on a now you see it, now you don't basis about three years ago. Given that the label at the time also forget both retailers and customers, it is a good thing that Round Tower have rescued it from undeserved obscurity.

Co-produced by the artist and Tom Russell, with several of the pairs' co-writes included, it's an album for the cognoscenti who relish a good song, lyrically and harmoniously crafted and performed by musicians for whom a deft touch is of more consequence than grandstanding.

Seek it out and hear Chocolate Cigarettes. If they don't melt in your ear ...

★★★ Steve Morris

TOWNES VAN ZANDT

**No Deeper Blue
(Roadsongs / Direct Distribution)**

No Deeper Blue was cut in deepest Limerick, Eire last year, with picker' n' strummer' Philip Donnelly in charge of production. Fortunately, the axeman has avoided being as heavy handed with Townes' tunes as he was, with say, Lee Clayton's Spirit of the Twilight. On the other hand, at least there's content, as far as Townes' lyrics are concerned. When it comes down to Townes' vocal style, I always end up drawing the conclusion 'Hell, seems like I've heard a lot of this before.' Thing is, on No Deeper Blue we finally get new songs. The opening cut A Song For, contains the neat couplet 'London to Dublin, Australia to Perth'. Thing is, the latter half is a heartfelt acknowledgement of those Thompson boys, who promote his shows in Perth, Scotland. Fellow songwriter and friend, [the late] Blaze Foley is eulogised in Blaze's Blues, while If I Was Washington is one of his best light-hearted/serious songs - ever. The tuba, clarinet and penny whistle, just add that extra twinkle to the humorous side of the cut. At the end of fourteen songs, the conclusion? The legend is sustained.

★★★ Arthur Wood

VARIOUS

Coming Down (Creation)

OK so they've got Oasis. But what else have Creation released that was worth a toss. Ride? Yeh, give you that. Sugar, Boo Radleys, My Bloody Valentine? OK, they did sign them yes. Velvet Crush, Primal Scream, Heidi Berry, 18 Wheeler? The Telescopes, Jazz Butcher, Biff Bang Pow, BMX Bandits, The Times, Slaughter Jo, James Young? And bloody 70s cult Fred Neil, the bloke who wrote Everybody's Talkin? And all of them with a track each on this compilation album. Fine. But apart from all that, what have Creation ever done that makes them so bloody brilliant then!

★★★

Mike Davies

VARIOUS

This is Fort Apache (MCA)

Part owned by Billy Bragg, Boston based Fort Apache is both studio and label and this is, essentially, a musical testimonial from assorted clients who've recorded there, a sort of self-defining listening advert for the studio. Self-respecting indie fans will already be aware of or own most of the tracks here (previously issued cuts by among others Belly, Radiohead, Buffalo Tom, Lemonheads, Throwing Muses, and Bragg himself), but you also get Magnetic North Pole, a taster (sounding not unlike X in their more commercial ringing guitar rock moments) from the debut album by FA signings Cold Water Flat and, more especially, Murdering Stone, a previously unissued swagger by The Walkabouts, well worth the price alone - unless of course you already got it on the label's free NME promo tape.

★★★

Mike Davies

VARIOUS

**Shut Up And Listen...
(Flair Foundation)**

The Flair Foundation was set up to develop creative opportunities for Wolverhampton's young people and this is an 18 track offering, showcasing nine bands from the area. It's a pretty eclectic mix, featuring punksters Face Pollution and Swaktang, Veronica 5's groove rock, band-of-the-album, High On Jesus' sophisticated, moody metallic funk, the late '60s garage sound of Free-loader and the stunning, Joplinesque vocal skills of Stone Scream's Carina. Often, these things can be pretty unimaginative, but S.U. & L. highlights once more the wealth of talent bubbling in the Midlands.

★★★ Max

STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

**Couldn't Stand The Weather
(Epic Mastersound)**

From the easy swing of Cold Shot to the hard blues of The Things (That) I Used To Do and a bravura take on Jimi's Voodoo Chile, this is Stevie Ray Vaughan at his best. The impressive re-mastering and gold disc simply make the music breathe a lot more.

★★★★ Steve Morris

WEATHER REPORT

**Heavy Weather
(Columbia Mastersound)**

With the front-line talent of Joe Zawinul, Jaco Pastorius and Wayne Shorter, Weather Report not only brought commercial fruit to fusion courtesy of this album's Birdland but also a melodic sense that the genre often jettisoned in its search for the abstract.

★★★ Sam Mitchell

CHRIS WHITLEY

Din of Ecstasy (Columbia)

In 1991 Whitley released debut album Living With the Law. Since which time many have been eagerly awaiting a second dose of the rural blues and roots-rock embodied in the likes of Big Sky

Country, Kick The Stones and Phone Call From Leavenworth. In which case, this is going to be a crushing disappointment. In the interim Whitley's discovered Hendrix, exchanging the blues for discordant psychedelic riffs, wah wah splurges and feedbacking amps, and immersed himself in songs about death, drugs, God and addiction. You can call it a turbulent excursion into a tormented soul and talk about Robin Trower and Neil Young's Powderfinger era, you can talk (as he does) about clarity by way of distortion. But despite the acoustic blues scouring pad of New Machine and the almost commercial rock swagger of Din, in the end too much of this is just so much howling of a man chewed up with demons.

★★ Mike Davies

FRANK ZAPPA

**Civilization Phase 3
(Zappa Records)**

Mmm, yes - there are people living inside a piano that could grow to be like Haight Ashbury ... the inside of the piano, that is! It's what the detailed liner notes call an opera pantomime with choreographed physical activity. Mmm!

It's made up of sampled voices (speaking randomly but with the unified inspiration of such words and phrases as pigs, ponies, dark water, nationalism, smoke, music, beer and so on.), glued together with Zappa's music. Right, that's clearer!

On the surface it's impenetrable nonsense. However there are references to Zappa's past, such as the Wild Man Fischer dig in the intro, that will fascinate the Zappologists amongst us.

Now, it's my genuine belief that Zappa will be regarded as one of the ages cultural geniuses but it'll take some distancing and discarding of his 'rock' baggage before pieces like this can be properly taken into that reckoning.

★★★

Steve Morris

ZUMPARO

**Look What The Rookie Did
(Sub Pop)**

Rough round the edges production wise and cluttered in the playing stakes, even so there's an attractive enthusiastic zing to this Canadian garage outfit overlorded by percussionist Jason Zumpano. The guitars do the steel wool bit on a couple of tracks but largely this is gentle, drift and skip pop that wears its 60s influences with pride. Not the usual suspects, though Pet sounds crops up on a few occasions, Zumpano cite the Zombies, Bacharach and David, Johnny Rivers and the Fifth Dimension, the latter represented by a cover (not as emotionally desolate but pleasantly acceptable) of their Jim Webb penned hit Rosecrans Boulevard. Harpers Bizarre without the college boy barber shopness, the Left Bank without the baroque overtones, Bare-naked Ladies without the mannered wit. And worth it just to hear She's a Full Blooded Sicilian. Buy it or sleep with the fishes.

★★ Mike Davies