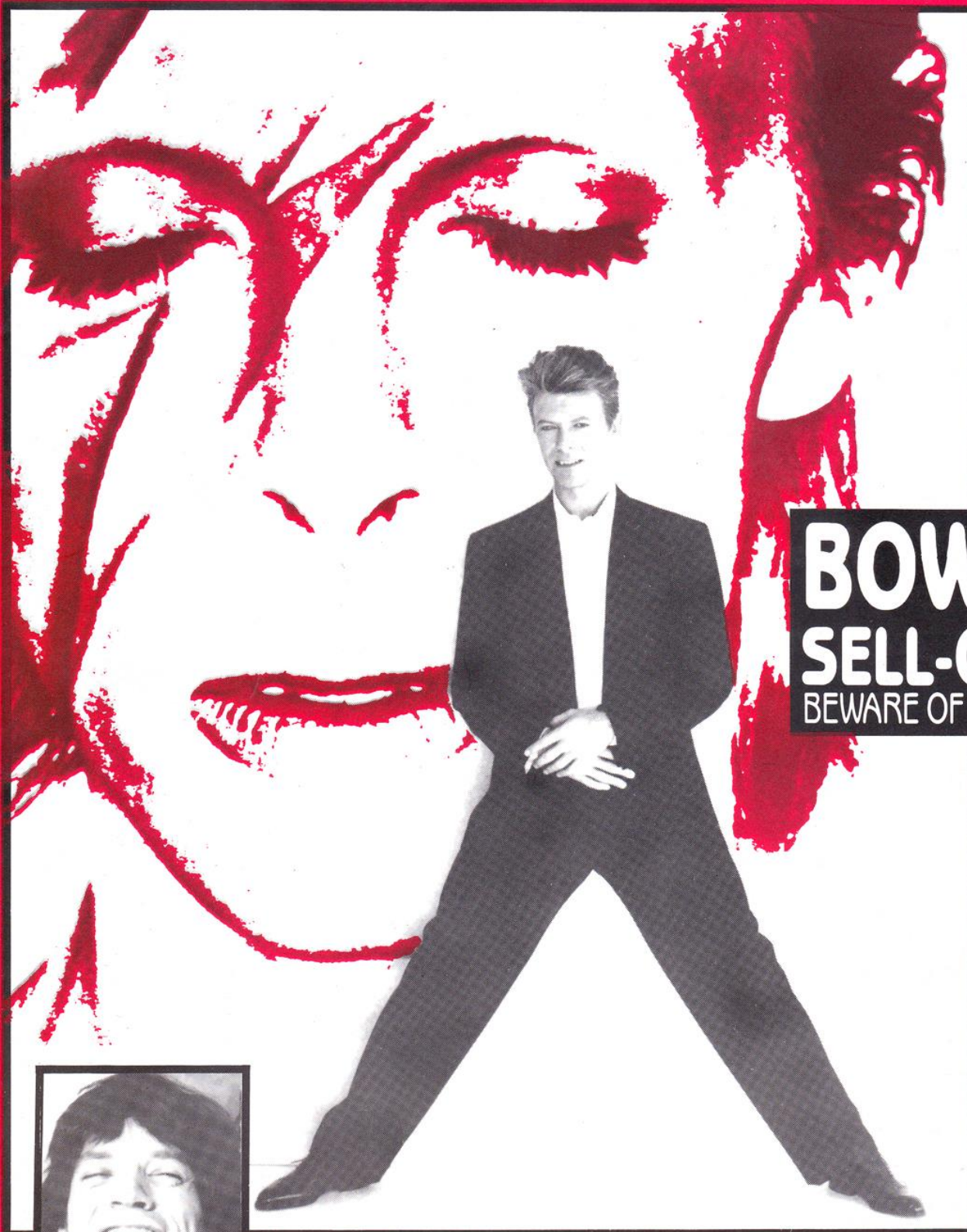


BRUM BEAT

THE MIDLANDS ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

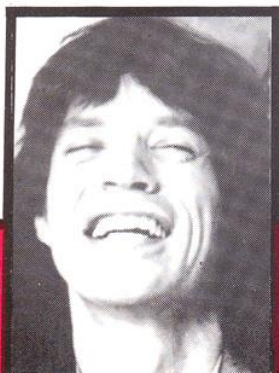
MARCH 1990



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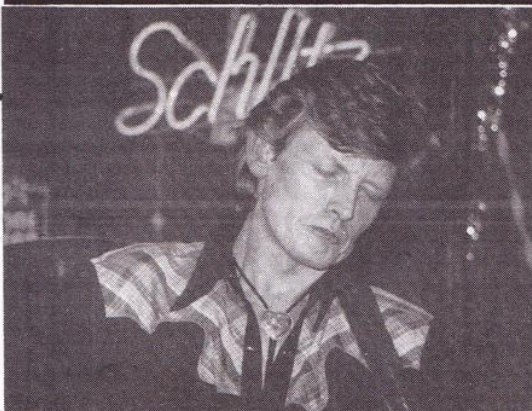
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IF you managed to catch Hank Wangford's recent Channel 4 series, 'Big Big Country', you won't have failed to observe the axe-toting gyrations of Martin Belmont (ex-Rumour). He's a big lad and that little guitar just seems to melt into his bulk. Anyway, Martin and one of his current combo's, the Tex Pistols - rockin' and truckin' country, a speciality - visit the Breedon Bar on Saturday 10th.

OTHER gigs to look out for at the Cotteridge venue during March include Steve Gibbons (Friday 2nd) and Wilko 'robot guitar' Johnson (Saturday 17th). Wilko's classic album, 'Ice On The Motorway', has just been reissued by Hound Dog Records. Friday 23rd sees the Breedon play host to the first of, at this point, a two-month-long series of gigs by Texas artists. First up, is accordionist Ponty Bone, a member of the original Joe Ely Band (circa 1978). I caught Ponty during a Stateside visit four years ago and would recommend his brand of Tex/Mex crossover country 'n' blues rhythms. Following a couple of EP's for the Austin-based Amazing Records label, Ponty released the albums 'Easy As Pie' (1986) and 'My, My, Look At This' (1987). He'll probably bring some copies with him. Check them out.

THE last day of March, completes a week during which a couple of personal dreams came true, for Reading's Terry Clarke. His long awaited debut album 'Call Up A Hurricane' will be released by PT Records. In addition, Saturday 31st sees Terry and the Stars of Austin make their Breedon Bar debut. Those Stars, will include our own Wes

ARTHUR WOOD



▲ TERRY CLARKE

STARS OF AUSTIN SHINE ON CLARKE

McGhee (practically a resident of Austin, Texas - except during the cricket season) and J. D. Foster (producer of Clarke's album). Foster, former Dwight Yoakam bassman, is also an Austin resident these days, where he has built an awesome local reputation as a musician and producer. The Barnbusters, his bluegrass band, have just released their debut cassette 'I Heard That!'.
MEANWHILE, McGhee has a potential PT Records album on the starting blocks for later this year. He'll be back at the Breedon during May, with Steady Freddie Krc - drummer extraordinaire. Krc is now carving out a career as an Austin country performer in his

own right. And most of all during the last week in March, BUY a copy of Clarke's debut album, because it's a killer. I hate comparisons, but it's like Joe meets Jimmie with a dash of George, while remaining firmly imprinted with Clarke's own visions. If you know your Lubbock, you'll have caught my drift; if you haven't, do yourself a favour and still BUY it. Commercial ends. And no, I don't know who put my name to those liner notes!.

I mentioned Ian Matthews' (ex Fairports, MSC, Plainsong and solo) West Midlands gig in last month's 'Roots'. In the interim, the venue has been changed. You can now catch Ian in concert at The Holly Bush, (A449) Penn Rd. on the

south side of Wolverhampton on Friday 9th. Almost sounds exotic. Matthews' last recorded offering, from the Spring of 1988, was 'Walking A Changing Line' (Windham Hill) which featured Jules Shear songs from front to back. Matthews has added another local gig to his tour - it's at the Breedon Bar on Thursday 15th.

APART from Matthews, Acoustic Roots, the Brierley Hill-based folk/country promoters, also present a couple of other local shows during March. First up is the guitarist Duck Baker, at Trysull Village Hall on Tuesday 13th. At Wombourne Civic Centre on Monday 26th, AR present a Texan double-header with Guy Clark (tall and laconic with a bag full of familiar songs) plus relative newcomer, Robert Earl Keen Jr. - a songwriter to watch, and who possesses a rapier sharp wit. No doubt Guy will deliver the same set as per his last few tours. Seems that some people just can't get enough repetition. Personally, well, I'll keep it to myself. I predict that Keen will gain many new followers from this, his debut UK tour. After a few verses of 'Swerving In My Lane', a dash of 'The Armadillo Jackal' and an introduction to the joys of 'Copenhagen', I'm certain that Keen will have the

audience of AR regulars eating out of his hand. In early April (the 2nd to be exact) Keen plays a solo date at the Breedon Bar.

ELSEWHERE during March rising Irish chanteuse Mary Coughlan plays the Irish Centre, Digbeth, on Monday 19th. Early in April, and hot on the heels of their second album release 'The Caution Horse', The Cowboy Junkies are at the Birmingham Town Hall on Monday 2nd. Later on that month, on three consecutive nights at the Breedon, Bob and Ann Moore play host to a solo Joe Ely performance (Wed 11th), Kimmie Rhodes here for another Wembley Country extravaganza, and doubtless backed by a mixture of English/Texan players (Thurs 12th) and finally the cajun dance music of Le Rue (Fri 13th). Maybe you should check out the audience for Freddie look-alikes at the latter show?

I'LL be back next month, with more unbiased opinions and information. In the interim, I know you will all have BOUGHT that new album I told you about earlier. And just as a teaser, one of my two favourite songwriters on this whole planet visits Birmingham during May. All will be revealed in the next spine-tingling episode of 'ROOTS', the guide to acoustic avalon. BUY. I mean, bye!

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HUGH HARRIS

Words For Our Years

(Capitol)

Recent successes by Mr Trent D'Arby and Roachford must have spurred on Hugh Harris.

Possessor of a fine soul voice he may be, just like those gents, but also like them the confines of straight soul or dance trax are not for him. There's more chance of raunchy guitar than smooth sax.

Sadly there is a large dependance on rhythm machines with their attendant lack of spirit, a fact cruelly pointed to by the presence of the metronomic but feel filled drumming of Jeff Porcaro on some tracks.

The other problem is material - there is little here that hits home without constant hearing. Now maybe that's a good point in these days of disposable stars but it doesn't stand Hugh in good stead for playlists and sales.

Overall it's a good if not vital debut. Hugh Harris succeeds in carving a niche for himself in the black rock market and I'm sure he is here to stay. More promise than substance maybe, but it is one helluva huge promise.

Steve Morris

THE GRACES

Perfect View (A&M)

Seemingly a new vehicle for ex Go Go and Belinda Carlisle associate Charlotte Caffey, The Graces are in fact a three way co-operative that also features the hitherto unknown Meredith Brooks and Gia Ciambotti.

The result is a sparkling pop confection that redefines the notion of female pop groups. The opener, Caffey's 'Lay Down Your Arms' is a killer single that will be a hit when Joe Public catches up with it.

The following nine songs follow that fizzing start in like mode creating a swathe of prime, bright as a button bop.

Short changed by the Bangles and disco bimbos? The Graces are the answer.

Steve Morris

CLIVE GREGSON

Welcome To The Workhouse

(Special Delivery)

Since my opinions had at least a partial influence (and a namecheck on the sleeve. Ed.) on the final selection for this collection of demos and outtakes, you might be wary of investigating. Don't worry,



Gregson's genius is such it leaves no room for bad choices. Ranging from the Any Trouble years through solo work to his partnership with Christine Collister it's a valuable memento of an artist's sketchbook with Gregson not afraid to include warts 'n' all. Of especial interest are a rock 'n' rolling Stonesy 'Standing In Your Shadow' and 'This Tender Trap', both 1985 demos for Arista, the original version of 'Trouble With Love', Gregson and the Sutherland Brothers on 'Time Does Not Heal', the superior pre-EMI demo of 'I'll Be Your Man' and a quite achingly beautiful solo acoustic version of 'She's Out Of My Life'.

Further proof, were it needed, that Gregson is one of the country's finest yet underdiscovered talents.

Mike Davies

TEXANA DAMES

Texana Dames (Sonet)

A five piece fronted by a trio of Hancock ladies La Conni, Traci and momma Charlene who, it is claimed, was an influence on Buddy Holly.

Now that fact alone would sell 'em to me but thankfully the album turns out to be a red hot compendium of country music covering conjunto, R&B, cajun and rock 'n' roll flavourings with fiddles, steels and accordians colouring the fine songs and vocals.

Ladle on the expertise of guest pickers Lonnie Mack, Doug Sahm, Ponty Bone and Erik Hokannen and you have an album that will be played and played and played.

A totally unexpected delight this one, be warned though that the opening track undersells the album. Get past that and you won't take it off.

Steve Morris

HARRY CHAPIN

The Last Protest Singer

(Sequel)

Chapin, an intelligent, thoughtful singer songwriter with an active social conscience died in '81. The Last Protest Singer was his concept album in progress at that time. Destined to be an 18 song suite his friends have salvaged this 11 track album in the manner that



▲ THE CRAMPS
pic: Rocky Schenk

Chapin himself, they believe, would have done. Consequently it's not as cohesive as it might have been but it does include several provoking songs.

Whatever you feel about audio grave robbing this album is not a simple cash in. It's been lovingly assembled and stands as an affectionate memory if not quite achieving the standard of definitive memorial.

Steve Morris

SOULED AMERICAN

Around The Horn

(Rough Trade)

I only managed to bear a couple of tracks from last year's slab of Souled American vinyl, 'Flubber', before I quickly despatched it to its cover. Fred McMurray had a lot to answer for there. This time, I decided to persevere through all eleven tracks of this lyrically unintelligible, Neo-1 Youngish exercise in whining. The catch seems to be who is kidding who. The publicity blurb accompanying this release claimed that Souled American "leaves the listener to interpret the songs as they may wish". Songs, what songs? Claims were also made that the "band bond their enthusiasm for the music". Music? Didn't music once include something called a tune? If "their own kind of music, a 'new' music" is a glimpse of the future; where it's an acceptable par for dirges

and the singer thereof, to consistently appear out of tune, then don't bother with the lifebelt.

Arthur Wood

JULEE CRUISE

Floating Into The Night

(Warners)

Cruise provided the sweet hymnal innocence of 'Mysteries Of Love', the delicate end credits antidote to the unease of 'In Dreams' in David Lynch's 'Blue Velvet'. Lynch supplies the lyrics and co-produced the album, which probably explains the worm in the rose quality it possesses and the unexpected dramatic jarring intrusions into Angelo Bandalamenti's mellifluously drifting sugar-sweet 50's styled melodies such as in 'I Remember' and 'Into The Night'. A case of Lynch applying his distinctive filmmaking sensibilities to an album scenario, extending the film auteur theory to the recording studio. Cruise breathes out the songs like a perfumed breeze in an almost ghostly trancelike ecstasy that both entrances and unsettles. Bit like a Lynch film actually.

Mike Davies

THE CRAMPS

Stay Sick! (Enigma)

Welcome back to a world in which women are dangerous. Deillahs in fishnets - 'Bikini Girls With Machine Guns' - and sex 'n' rawk 'n' roll is the healing balm.

Drop a dime into the warped Wurlitzer for a sound like 1956 Elvis backed by the Outlaws in Joe Meek's loft. A stadium of rumble-ing echo where guitars are permanently on reverb and the wang bar is compulsory. The cover girl is called Ukhan Kizmiyaz and one look/listen will make sure that "Your gamagoochie's got the gags/And your hoochie coochies hangin' out", as they say in 'Mama OO Pow'. A title that clearly indicates where The Cramps are out to lunch at. Wherever it is the food tastes fine!

Steve Morris

COMPANY OF WOLVES

(Vertigo)

Latest guitar swaggering rockers come on with enough snarl to convince you the teeth have the grip to bite. At times almost a mix of Mellencamp and Bon Jovi with the accent as much on melody as power and a decided pop consciousness. 'St. Jane's Infirmary' aside the songs don't bear too close a lyrical inspection but if you want either a left hook or a bruised heart then check out 'Call Of The Wild' or 'Everybody's Baby'.

Mike Davies

CHARLES MANN

Walk Of Life

VARIOUS

Zydeco Blues 'n' Boogie

(Gumbo)

A twin exhaust hot blast for the launch of Cooking Vinyl's Louisiana imprint, Gumbo. Charles Mann picked up plenty of Radio One play with his zydeco-d D. Straits 'Walk Of Life' early this year and the album carries on in that vein with Mann adding cajun sauce to Sir Doug's 'She's About A Mover', Neil Diamond's 'Red Red Wine' and Bruce Chancel's 'Hey Baby' among a clutch of originals.

'Zydeco Blues 'n' Boogie' throws up a baker's dozen of songs and singers new to me but it's a feast nonetheless. Slowcooked well spiced R&B for the feet and soul.

Certainly not hi-tech, the feel is the thing. This is music for living to, drinking, dancing, loving - whatever.

Given that these records are Gumbo 001 and 002 I can only advise that you start collecting in earnest right now.

Steve Morris