

**BRUM**

55p

the midlands music monthly and more!

# BEAT

## ***bang! bang!***

***the music machine***

november 1995 issue 176



**iron-maiden**  
going to blaze's

**win a SONY DISCMAN with**



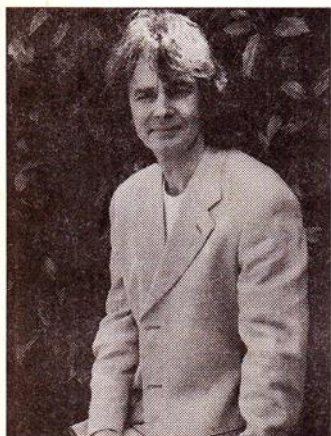
plus:  
**echobelly**  
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**the roches**  
**the essential gig guide**  
**the hottest demo**  
**column in town**  
**news ... reviews**





FOLEY's Big City Blues (Antones) which from the barrelhouse of the title track to the come hither cover of Dylan's To Be Alone With You and the National steered Highway Bound finally convinces me of just how good she can be. Something that DANA GILLESPIE's Blue One (Wolf Records) simply fails to do. It's a good late night set that in being determinedly laid back fails to even smoulder. Ex Animal Dave Rowberry adds keyboards and blues legend Rolf Harris adds jews harp and accordion - no, really. One for Elkie Brooks fans. THE ROB TOGONI BAND are produced by Dave Hoge and Stones And Colours (Provogue) is the somewhat predictable result - valve boiling guitar workouts on predictable themes. An album to sell to the sweaty faithful at storming gigs, methinks. Let's go out with a goodie; LOU ANN BARTON's Old Enough (Antones) finds the Texas blueser recording at Muscle Shoals with the legendary Barry Beckett, David Hood and Roger Hawkins musical foundation aided and abetted by the guitars of Jimmie Vaughan and Glenn Frey (!) who produces alongside the redoubtable Jerry Wexler. It's a sassy, Hammond and horn drenched soulblues show that even performs alchemy on Marshall Crenshaw's poplite Brand New Lover making it a sixties floorshaker! Sam Mitchell

## COLIN BLUNSTONE Echo Bridge (Permanent)



A re-recorded 'greatest hits' set in 91 aside, thanks to a contractual hassles, this is the former Zombie's first solo album since 1979. Despite critical acclaim and some first rate albums in the early 70s, Blunstone never really made it and this is an attempt to rectify the situation fourth time around. The voice is less of the creamy breathy burr and, as might be expected, the music is firmly in fortysomething (he's just turned 50) comfy chair rock land, emphasised by the sleeve photos of him looking like a male model for Town and Country Casuals. Of the songs, there's an emotionless version of Levi Stubb's Tears and Charlie Dore's The Radio Was Playing Johnny Come Late-

# backbeat

Perhaps it's best left to compiler Alan Clayton to explain the inclusion of Benny Hill's What A World on BEAT MERCHANTS (See For Miles), the album that acts as soundtrack to his intriguing and like titled book. Both reflect Clayton's affectionate addiction to sixties pop and beat groups that on this aural exposure were, in the main, lacking in the X factor. The Searchers and The Kinks stand head and shoulders above The Flee Reklers, Lance Harvey and co whilst local interest focuses on Steve Gibbons, both as SGB and frontman of The Ugly's, The Rockin Berries and The Hellions with 50% of Traffic in their ranks. The trend resistant nature of sixties beat is illustrated with new recordings from Dave Berry, The Nashville Teens and Clayton's own Argonauts. And as if to prove that as both muso and writer Clayton has his favourite riffs; wasn't the sleeve's description of The British Invasion All Stars - Like a Viking longship docking in a hovercraft terminal - once used to describe King Pleasure And The Biscuit Boys in these very pages?

Happily there's been no unseemly rush of second rate releases to pass the demise of GRATEFUL DEAD's Jerry Garcia and Warner Brothers' Europe '72 simply arrives as scheduled. The triple live set now on two CDs - mastering approved by the Dead - isn't anyway a set that would tempt the mourners. Whilst all the hallmarks of a loose flowing Dead show are present with generous helpings of Garcia's guitar alchemy to entrance. It's tempting to speculate that in synthesising so many of America's native musical forms the Dead actually created a new and unique variety of their own.

Being as near to the shopping season as we are the greatest hits packages are beginning to tease the money out of your wallets. Curiously several of them are from acts who already have such sets in the racks; ROBERT PALMER, for example offers The Very Best Of (EMI) to tempt those who are unaware of Addictions Volumes 1 and 2 that already tread the same basic terrain. Excellent though Palmer is, something this sixteen tracker proves with eloquence, it seems a bit much to offer a third hits package. GERRY RAFFERTY's One More Dream - The Very Best Of (Polygram TV) does at least cast its net wider. Than his previous Best Of in gathering material from several labels and eras, though the absence of sleeve notes is no help in sorting out the source albums. Still Baker Street is gloriously remastered and the Reservoir Dog's featured Stuck In The Middle is included, albeit in an unnecessarily re-recorded version. PROCOL HARUM too have had Best Of's, at budget price too, though Homburg And Other Hats (Essential) is the first to sample their career as broadly with Grand Hotel and the symphony orchestrated Conquistador standing alongside the obvious Whiter Shade Of Pale era material. Sadly though there's no space for In The Wee Small Hours Of Sixpence. CARTER THE UNSTOPPABLE SEX MACHINE make their hits album debut (though on current form it'll be the last one too) with Straw

Donkey ... The Singles (Chrysalis) which convoluted lyrics an' all is a rash of pop music to hearten all those who think it should be rollocking, disposable and in yer face.

A favoured reissue 'round these parts is NICK LOWE's Part Of One (Demon) which arrives rather better dressed than first time round and with two bonus cuts. Fifties pop cut sixties style for the nineties just about sums up this minor gem. Treasure Box collects 25 rarities, including 12" mixes and demos, from MARC ALMOND's years at EMI, with a collector-pleasing 23 available on album for the first time. How many copies will be bought by non-fanatics remains to be seen, though.

The Beeb's bountiful archives continue to offer up historic nuggets. Among the many recent gems are JUDY TZUKE's 1981 In Concert (Windson), with the inevitable Stay With Me Till Dawn alongside less known but equally silky material. THE (Ian) HUNTER (Mick) RONSON BAND's 1989 In Concert is a meatier affair, while DIRE STRAITS' from 1978 (with an additional cut from an '81 Whistle test) has the band unsullied by later Radio Two friendly tedium. A laid-back, four track Kershaw Session EP from POP STAPLES (Strange Fruit) is more bluesy than his Staples Singers background might suggest whilst CAN's mix of Peel Session tracks from '73 - '75 feels as contemporary as one could hope.

And to the dancefloor for the remainder of the column ... GREGG DIAMOND's Discotech (Pulsar / Magnum) sounds exactly like the disco music you hear in soap opera club scenes despite - or maybe because - it features Sam Fox, Bananarama, Chaka Khan, Gloria Gaynor and Luther Vandross all straddling some appallingly lame dance beats. Far better are the results of Castle's plundering of the Solar label vaults for its new Renaissance Collector Series; The Very Best Of SHALAMAR takes it to the bank from the session singer beginnings of Uptown Festival through the Watley / Daniel / Hewitt hitfest of There It Is, I Can Make You Feel Good and A Night To Remember to the name as cashcow demise days of Deadline USA. The Best Of THE WHISPERS is almost as good with the label's fine understanding of the pop / R&B / dance cocktail conjuring such gems as And The Beat Goes On and It's A Love Thing. Less heralded but still with a Very Best Of, MIDNIGHT STAR were less poppy and more funky though still with a melodic flair. All of the above plus Carrie Lucas, Dynasty, Collage, The Sylvers and more can be sampled on THE BEST OF SOLAR, almost eighty minutes that defines the best of early eighties dancefloor action.

And if soul dance really is your, er, thang, Warner Brothers ULTIMATE SOUL COLLECTION VOL.2 will thrill you skinny. It's a faultless 45 track 2CD set of Stax / Atlantic / Motown etc. sixties / seventies dominated material that can, without fear of argument, boast a complete absence of filler. Not one single cut here is worthy of less than a full five stars. Brilliant.

Steve Morris

ly sounds too close to Rod's Young Hearts Run Free for comfort, while elsewhere there's material from Nik Kershaw, Cliff regular Chris Eaton, and Gallagher & Lyle (a leaden Breakaway), which pretty much tells you what to expect. Well crafted, well groomed and unobtrusive, but you really expect more from the man who sang Time of the Season, She's Not There and I Don't Believe In Miracles.

★★★ Mike Davies

## THE BURNS SISTERS

### Close to Home (Philo / Direct Distribution)

Like The Roches, Annie, Marie and Jeannie Burns are a trio of thirty somethings - though without the quirkiness. The girls swing and sway with Marie's reflective opener We Never Said Good-bye, skip and hop through New Kind of Old Fashioned Girl and sing like angels on the traditional, Bright Morning Star. There's even room in their world for covers of Van's Irish Heartbeat and Steve Van Zandt's I Am a Patriot. These girls can be country, folk and gospel; insidiously low key, it creeps quietly into your sub-conscious and sets up permanent residence there.

★★★ Arthur Wood

## LISA CERBONE

### Close Your Eyes (Unique Gravity)

A new addition to the Tori Amos school of confessional singer-songwriter roots rock, Baltimore based Cerbone has the bruised little girl voice to go with her bleak stories of the street that embrace teenage tales of incestuous abuse, battered wives, and dead end relationships but rarely let her dysfunctional characters lose sight of some sort of hope. Echoes of Vega, Mitchell and Ian reverberate as strongly as The Sundays or Cranberries, but ultimately songs like Amber, Painful Smile and Close Your Eyes denote her as having a resonant voice and style of her own.

★★★★ Mike Davies

## ALICE COOPER

### Classicks (Epic)

Oh dear, with the bad pun title and schlock horror artwork, this new 'best of' is indeed a desperate item. Accepting that the recent hits, Poison and Hey Stupid were dilute Alice and noting that the real meat, Under My Wheels, School's Out, I'm Eighteen and Billion Dollar Babies are all recent live versions, you're forced to conclude that it really does seem all over for Mr.C.

★ Steve Morris

## ELECTRAFIXION

### Burned (Warner Bros.)

After a couple of albums bent on self analysis, ex Echo & The Bunnymen Ian McCulloch has regrouped with guitarist Will Sergeant to form Electrafixion. They throw out a super streamlined pop rock hybrid punctuated by the ever acidic McCulloch drawl and quarry loads of gravelly guitar from Sergeant. Gone are the fey 80s embellishments, Burned being crafted in a manner that lets no-one write off the band as a 90s



## recorded delivery

short sharp (15 tracks in 31 minutes) high energy pogo beat goes, this has its moments, most notably Happiness, Flat and the give the game away reverential cover of Teenage Kicks.

★★★ Mike Davies

### JAMES KEELAGHAN

**A Recent Future (Green Linnet / Direct Distribution)**

The lyrics of this Canuck folk writer are still influenced by the historical literature which he continues to eagerly devour. As in Cold Missouri Waters [inspired by Norman MacLean's Young Men and Fire], Honore [about the 1885 Indian Act Rebellion], and not forgetting the bewildered perspective of his ode to Richard Nixon, Lazarus. Elsewhere there's songs about love of country [Sweetgrass Moon], love of life [Colleen Eccleston's Dance As You Go] and an enthusiasm for all the days to come, in the title composition. A workmanlike set.

★★ Arthur Wood

### PAUL KELLY

**Deeper Water (Mushroom)**

With more albums unissued in the UK than most homegrown bands produce in a lifetime, Australian star Kelly makes another bid to achieve the sort of success here he enjoys back home and in America. Essentially a strummer rocker with Dylan influences, Kelly's an antipodean answer to Tom Petty and Nils Lofgren, mixing up folksy ballads, moody rock and the occasional splash of blues and R&B. This maintains the formula to reliable effect but while sure to find favour with established fans it's unlikely to produce a significant increase of new ones.

★★★ Mike Davies

### CHRISTINE LAVIN

**Please Don't Make Me Too Happy (Shanachie)**

So what's this then? A liner booklet dedication to the 'sweetest, kindest, best looking, smartest man I know', a ring on her wedding finger and the admission under the heading For Your Information, that all thirteen songs are based on real people and real events. Acting as bookends to the thirteen cuts, are two versions of Oh No ... dedicated to that [seemingly endless] human foible of mislaying your ... spectacles, car keys, TV remote control, purse, telephone book, contact lens and an ear ring ... and almost every other essential life support item which you, own and own. You can contact the principal character in *Psychic* by dialling 0891, if you follow my drift. The offer of a helping hand, from a psychic who has a tender and caring spirit, is eventually clarified by the punchline "Tell me your troubles, Don't hang up, It's my job to

jack you phone bill up." A string quartet underpins the melody on Jagged Hearts, while Lavin regales the listener with a sad tale of unrequited L-O-V-E. ★69 is truly an aural epic, relative to the newly introduced telephone facility of redialling the last person you called. As astute and humorous as ever, in terms of observing the race hominid, Lavin can also deliver a KO blow when she paints pictures of reality.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

### THE MAVERICKS

**Music For all Occasions (MCA)**



Indisputably the top country band around, this recreates the 60s Nashville of Eddy Arnold, Merle Haggard and George Jones on the one hand with Foolish Heart, Loving You, The Writing On The Wall (a bit Dave Edmunds actually) and All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down (with Flaco Jimenez) and balances it with the pure Orbison of Missing You and the Presleyish If You Only Knew on the other. Then they slip in Here Comes The Rain with its nod to Them's Here Comes The Night, a jazz lounge My Secret Flame, and a superb cowboy round up on the range cover of Blue Moon. Add to that a spot on duet with Trisha Yearwood on the classic Something Stupid and it would be a foolish, lone voice that didn't say this was the country album of the month, if not year.

★★★★★ Mike Davies

### MEAT LOAF

**Welcome To The Neighbourhood (Virgin)**

Following the if it ain't broke don't fix it principle of the original Bat Out Of Hell follow up Dead Ringer, it's a case of more of the same in the wake of the 12 million selling Bat 2. Which like its predecessor means more widescreen, big drama rock'n'roll ballads and yet more recycling of Jim Steinman's back catalogue in the form of Original Sin from the Pandora's Box album and, going back even further, Left In The Dark off Bad For Good. The rest follows the same blueprint, indeed Diane Warren's I'd Lie For You, Not A Dry Eye In The House and If This Is The Last Kiss could actually be Steinman songs. There's some track skipping filler, the throwaway quickies Fiesta De Las Almas Perdidas and 45 Seconds Of Ecstasy (which doesn't say much for his sexual staying power), the routine party down Runnin' For The Red Light which is basically built around a revamp of The Easybeats' Good Times and Sammy Hagar's standard kick ass Amnesty Is Granted, don't contribute a great deal to the experience. But Where The Rubber Meets The Road is a clever

commentary on safe sex that provides a post AIDS riposte to Paradise By The Dashboard Light, and Tom Waits surely never dreamed that his Martha would ever end up wearing such outsize clothes or keeping such lurid company. I'm not sure it's a neighbourhood you'd want to live in, but it's definitely worth a few visits

★★★★ Mike Davies

### MOJAVE 3

**Ask Me Tomorrow (4AD)**

In the wake of Tarnation comes yet another 4AD signing reminiscent of the Cowboy Junkies with their hushed and haunting, melancholic moods of aching longing and sparse palette of instrumental colours augmented by an occasional splash of cello. However, formed from the ashes of Slowdive by guitarist

Neil Halstead and fellow vocalist Rachel Goswell, they also come sporting a strong Leonard Cohen influence, most manifest in Candle Song 3 and Where Is The Love, both of which could have been lifted from the Songs Of era. Beguiling, beautiful and with the atmospheric touch of curling smoke, but you have to question why the A&R department would sign two bands of such stylistic similarity as to divide the potential audience and marketing resources.

★★★★ Mike Davies

### NON

**Might (Mute)**

This is heavy, weird shit! Lyrically inspired by a Darwinian tract, Might Is Right, written a century ago by some strange dude called Ragnar Redbeard,

## NOW YOU HAVE ... JAZZ

Jazz, it seems, is one of those genres with a high put off factor. There are so many all knowing pundits that see it as their duty to erect such a smokescreen of intellectualism that the inquisitive newcomer is likely to flee. So it's good news that the Music Club label enable the curious with fine £5.99 compilations by giants such as John Coltrane and Charles Mingus. Their latest is CHARLIE PARKER's In A Soulful Mood which collects twenty six of the groundbreaking sax man's forties recordings. Titles like Ornithology, A Night In Tunisia and Yardbird Suite are synonymous with Parker and should, at the price, attract more into his web. And Roy Carr's informative sleeve notes will ease the path, too. Like Parker BILLIE HOLIDAY is as much myth as music these days and the remarkable On The Sentimental Side (Past Perfect) gladly fuels both. The music is from the lady's thirties sessions and mastered from original 78s - though the technology Past Perfect use renders the sound crystal clear and incredibly clean. It's certainly the very best remastering of 78s that I've ever heard and the performances of songs like Night And Day, Until The Real Thing Comes Along and The Man I Love are masterful. The same label's treatment of FATS WALLER oldies for Ain't Misbehavin' is equally jaw slackening. BEN WEBSTER's In A Mellow Tone (Ronnie Scott's Jazz House) may be aurally lacking - it was taped on a portable at Scott's London emporium in '65 but the legendary tenor sax is as languidly lyrical as you might expect from a man who was once Billie Holiday's sax symbol. Music Club have been dipping into Ronnie's tape archive for JAZZIN AT RONNIE'S a seventy four minute, £5.99 compilation that features Sarah Vaughan, Marion Montgomery, Arturo Sandoval, Irakere and more. It's eclectic which means that it doesn't hang together as well as it might though the value is undeniable. From the same source comes ROY AYERS Vibesman, Live At Ronnie Scott's which offers an hour and a quarter of Ayers trademark funk lite for less than six quid. Same label, same value for JOCKOMO JOCKOMO, a score plus of tracks from New Orleans with a jazz / R&B flavour. Professor Longhair, Irma Thomas, James Booker and The Rebirth Brass Band are among the legends that'll have you pining for gumbo and cold longnecks. JAZZ FUSIONS THREE (Fusion / Beechwood) is a contemporary sampler offering Pat Metheny, Earl Klugh, George Duke, Tom Scott and more who operate on the cusp of cerebral and cool. THE UP & DOWN CLUB SESSIONS VOL.1 / VOL.2 (Mammoth) present a snap shot of the new and burgeoning San Francisco scene with names that may mean little - Josh Jones / Hueman Flavor with the respected Don Cherry / Alphabet Soup / Will Bernard etc. - and music that invigorates. Try guitarist Charlie Hunter's Funky Niblets on Vol. 1, for example. ANDY SHEPPARD has a new, French, label (Label Bleu) and a new band, Inclassifiable, a trio with his long-time keyboardist Steve Lodder and Brazilian percussionist / vocalist Nana Vasconcelos, the new setting giving his familiar playing an interesting twist. NANA VASCONCELOS' own album, Storytelling (EMI Hemisphere), was recorded solo and is something of a contrast, falling less readily into our idea of discrete tunes, more a collection of sound collages. MICHAEL MANTLER's Cerco Un Paese Innocente, meaning I Search For An Innocent Land and recorded with the Danish Radio Big Band, is less of a departure from his norm, mixing plaintive vocal interludes with hauntingly melancholy instrumentals, led by his mournful trumpet. CHICK COREA is still going strong; his new quartet having just released Time Warp (GRP), a happy blend of his feather-touch piano with bass, sax and drums, plus four pages of a bizarre "concept" storyline in the sleeve notes. On BACHOLOGY (EMI), an assortment of jazz artists perform pieces based on themes taken from famous works by Johann Sebastian. It might not please the fuddy-duddies at Gramophone magazine, but the composer would no doubt smirk at the mere audacity of such a project. Finally it's back to Music Club and their new Nascente imprint for two invaluable style browsers; AFRO CUBA offers a dozen shots of rhythm rammed jazz that aims for feet and hips before head whilst Rick Glanville's sleeve note contextualises the music and leads you into new pastures. It's a trick he performs on the companion LATIN JAZZ too!

Sam Mitchell



the 'music' is a dark exploration of trembling fears and nerve-twitching emotions. Non is actually Boyd Rice, a challenging artist who clearly has no intention of compromising his work for any commercial success. More power to him - Might is hard work and disturbing, but for anyone with an open mind, an oppressive cavern leading to some truly rewarding weirdness.

★★★★ B. Lee

## GRAM PARSONS

**Cosmic American Music - The Rehearsal Tapes 1972 (Sun-down / Magnum)**

Sourced from five of Parsons' personal cassettes sold at Christie's as part of a parcel of personal effects, the almost eighty minutes of music on this disc is not, as Sid Griffin's Gramophile sleeve-notes agree, for anyone curious about Gram. This is music for hard-core converts.

There are rough studio mixes but in the main it's ghetto-blast recordings from friend's lounges and hotel rooms. The lo-fi sound can be a little wearing.

On a positive note the undoubted intimate intrusion that listening to these tapes constitutes allows you to hear Parsons, Emmylou Harris and associates feel there way into songs or simply play them with the weary resignation privacy allowed. It's like sitting in at a rehearsal - a privilege.

Ultimately, just as Buddy Holly's apartment tapes and Beatles' bootlegs illuminate their work, this album helps us see how Gram made his unique, irreplaceable music. And it's a glimpse we should be grateful for.

★★★ Steve Morris

## PAUL

**Paul (Gravity)**

Paul by name, female by gender, androgynous by image. The press blurb uses words like sparse, dark, haunted, intensity. Reviews are more likely to say things like Liz Phair, PJ Harvey wannabe. This one says, some interesting Middle Eastern shapes but too much self-conscious art school poetic pretension ("I feel like a piece of cake on an armchair" for fuck's sake) in the lyrics for her own good. Must try harder. And not as much.

★★ Mike Davies

## PICASSO TRIGGER

**Bipolar Cowboy (Alias)**

It's the end of the world, right? So the shit hits the fan, right? Chaos. Anarchy. Unless you're a member of a gang or some hard-nut survivalist, you'll be the first to go under. Those are the facts, bubba. Oh yeah, and as you keel over under a barrage of kicks and blows, thinking, well, what the fuck - you scum will be dead too soon - you'll hear the faint strains of this perverted punk rock album being played by some twisted psycho somewhere in the distance. It won't make you feel a whole lot better, though. In fact, you'll have the sneaking suspicion that it was these goddamn North Carolina freaks that finally brought this rotten planet to its knees anyway. Fuckers.

★★★★ Max

## SMASHING PUMPKINS

**Mellon Collie & the Infinite Sadness (Hut)**



Oh dear. A double album clocking in at over 2 hours, divided into Dawn to Dusk and Twilight To Starlight, and clearly wearing concept aspirations, you'd be forgiven for thinking Billy Corgan had suddenly discovered Yes or, worse, Rush, especially given the title track's an opening instrumental. The good news is that, despite massive orchestral sweeps, three tracks that run over 7 minutes and titles like Bullet With Butterfly Wings, Porcelina Of The Vast Oceans, and Tales Of A Scorched Earth, this isn't a grunge Topographic Oceans or Hemispheres. The bad news is that while there's some suitably moody ballads and the intermittent explosion of raging guitar, the first album seems to manifest a bizarre wish to be Alice Cooper. Thankfully, or not depending on your artistic tolerance, the latter half of the "more eclectic" and predominantly acoustic Twilight disc harkens to Brian Wilson and in 1979, Lily, In the Arms of Sleep, and Farewell And Goodnight they've produced some of the finest work of their whole career. A pity you have to wade through 90 minutes of dross to appreciate it.

## SF SEALS

**Truth Walks In Sleepy Shadows (Matador)**

Barbara Manning's all girl outfit are firmly rooted in late 60s West Coast folk-rock, at times sounding like an across time fusion of the Great Society, Election and the Bangles with a dash of Neil Young to stoke the fires. Accordion, calliope and violin reinforce the homegrown country soundscape moods, while you really do have to admire any band that can include both a cover of SF Sorrow from the Pretty Things psychedelic concept album and the Roches like children's 'doing' song Kids Pirate Ship.

★★★ Mike Davies

## SMALL

**Silver Gleaming Death Machine (Alias)**



Yes, I know the title sounds like a Hawkwind or thrash metal album, but the North Carolinians actually play the sort of guitar frenzy pop that would have them described in some quarters as the US new wave of punk but is more accurately college garage rock. Okay of its type and extra marks for the title There's a Hatchet Buried Around

Here Somewhere, but unlikely that out of Small's things big thing grow.

★★ Mike Davies

## SUPERSUCKERS

**Sacrilegious (Sub Pop)**

Produced by a Butthole Surfer, announcing themselves as bad boy rock with a punk metal sensibilities, what you actually get is scuzzy, cranked up ripped n raw rockabilly R&B country punk with a shiver of slide blooze for good measure. It's not just the fact they wear stetsons, they sound like Jason and the Scorchers delinquent elder brothers.

★★★ Mike Davies

## JEANIE TRACY

**It's My Time (Pulse 8)**

Formerly one of those weighty Weather Girls, Tracy goes solo with an album that, while littered with weedy synths, drum machines and click tracks, still displays her big gospel soul voice to forceful effect. Things may be bent into a dance shape to suit the current market, but she can invest even mediocrity with a dynamic charge, while her volcanic version of It's a Man's Man's Man's World should have James Brown whimpering in envy.

★★★ Mike Davies

## VARIOUS

**Friends (Reprise)**

From the US TV sitcom series that gave the Rembrandts their hit with the Monkees sounding I'll Be There For You, comes a soundtrack album of previously unreleased and rare cuts, punctuated with extracts from the series. Among the former are essential acquisitions from Lou Reed, Toad The Wet Sprocket, Paul Westerberg, Joni Mitchell (a cut

## recorded delivery

up dance mix of Big Yellow Taxi) and Grant Lee Buffalo with a scintillating cover of Brian Wilson's In My Room. And for the latter, REM's It's a Free World Baby and, god knows why it was never a single, the Pretenders' version of Angel of the Morning.

★★★★ Mike Davies

## VARIOUS ARTISTS

**Sunday Morning Sessions (Munich / Direct Distribution)**

The sessions in question took place on a Dutch radio show hosted by Jan Donkers, while the CD liner notes were penned by Austin, Texas based DJ and journalist, Larry Monroe. You'd even hazard a guess [from the latter], that there's the possibility of a pretty strong Texas influence, musically. There is. It comes in the shape of Loose Diamonds, Calvin Russell, Butch Hancock and Jimmy LaFave. The latter performs his Dylan tribute Minstrel Boy Howling at the Moon - fittingly one of my all time favourite songs, and I'm not even a Zimmerman. Folkie John Gorka tells of The Gypsy Life while Dave Alvin performs Every Night About This Time. Another in the seemingly endless stream of damned fine, circa '95 compilations.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

## PATTY VETTA

**& ALAN FRANKS**

**Will (Road Goes On Forever)**

Once again it's the small independent label that comes to the rescue of original talent. Less financially able than the mega corporations (who this Christmas will repackage the hits once more to keep the accountants smiling) to gamble on newcomers but committed to following musical hearts, it's on such labels that you're likely to hear fresh voices these days. And that's the case here. Songwriter Franks is also a novelist, playwright and journalist - a wordsmith - and that shows in the crafted, considered lyrics that he feeds Vetta's sweet velvet voice. Not, it must be pointed out, at the cost of melody as is often the case with lyricists, Franks can add barbed melodic hooks to biting words with apparent consummate ease.

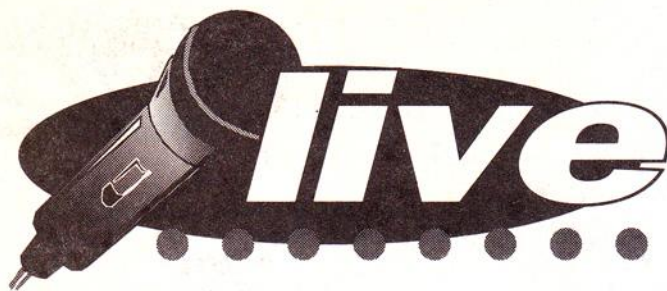
If you need a genre then folk is the obvious one though think MacColl, Rosselsson and Bragg rather than limp revivalism.

It seems shameful to level any criticism at such an auspicious debut and really there is but one - and that I expect to take care of itself on the next album - the recordings sound stiff; a little too rehearsed perhaps. When Alan and Patty next record they need to let their hearts guide the production just a tad more.

One final observation. Tim Rice is, surprisingly perhaps, a huge fan of this record and it seems to me that Alan Franks may well have a musical in him that could stand alongside the Alan Price / Lindsay Anderson collaborations of some years back.

★★★★ Steve Morris





## LEMONILLA

**The Golden Cross, Coventry.**

This was very much Untried Territory Night. Lemonilla asked me to come along and check 'em out without having a demo to let me listen to (not another band who've got a buzz about them before they've even recorded something - jeez!) to decide whether I was into 'em or not. It could've gone either way. "We're a pop band" they told me. And sho' 'nuff, Sunshine proved them right. But what they neglected to mention was that they are a hard as nails pop band. I have to admit that when I met them, I silently groaned to myself, 'cuz they looked like yer common or garden Brit-Pop outfit - and once or twice they do in fact come over all Oasis-y, which is always guaranteed to make me reach for my poison pen. But Lordy, Lordy, how deceiving can appearances be? Wide boys they may look like, but when it comes to delivering the goods, Lemonilla do in fact, er, deliver. Bouncing around and smiling at each other like excitable school kids, there's no pretentious, laddish posing here - these guys are just out to entertain and have a good time. If I strained, I could make out some neat harmonies buried under the muddy sound parping through the vocal pa - although in more laid back songs like John's Life or Katie Witch,

they manage to struggle to the surface, before being swamped (and I'm not complaining here - I love to hear sweet little ditties getting roughed up) again by some hardnut guitars.

D'y'know, after Superhero, it suddenly occurred to me who they sounded - and to some extent, looked like - very early Jam, which is no bad thing, and I s'pose fits quite nicely into what's going down at the moment in some quarters. Yeah, I know there's an incy-wincy bit of a mod thing in there, but I'm a reasonable guy - I'll acknowledge a good tune when I hear one. And hey - if we're gonna have another revival next week - how 'bout a Power Pop revival! And I nominate Lemonilla (crap name by the way boys) to spearhead it! Especially if they continue to lightly pepper it with a bit of scratchy ska. Perfectamundo! Some brass in there would sound great. And I like Lemonilla 'cuz they play short, sharp songs and a short, sharp set. I'm in there, I introduce myself to the band, they play, I say "You were great!", and I'm gone. Like I said, it coulda gone either way - just so happened that I was actually glad I dragged my tired ass over to Cov. to see an unsigned band I'd never heard of. Now that's what I call a Condor Moment.

Max

## ADRENALIN KICK

**Xposure Rock Cafe, Birmingham.**

Chatting to Adrenalin Kick before and after the show, you really couldn't ask to be in finer, more friendly company - either idly chewing the fat about things in general, or yammering on about exactly when (not if: AK are notoriously optimistic) the band will be as big as Metallica. But for the three quarters of an hour or so that they're on stage, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the last thing you'd wanna do is hang out with this bunch of teeth-gnashing psychos. That's because AK know how to put on a show. What they do - stomping, grinding, thrashing, ruffing - is for real alright, but they understand that what we don't want is five normal blokes cranking out some tired old bullshit for 45 minutes - we want fucken heroes, magnificently rocking out, briefly taking us somewhere else - entertaining us, yet retaining a grip on what's going on in the world (thus their politically-aware, but far from politically-dry subject matter - just check their current video to Future Visionary: a full-on, gritty, b/w affair that cuts between stark found-footage

and the band banging out their stuff). So, from the rip-roaring Born Blind to the manic Psychomania, it's savage, tendon-straining, '90s rock all the way. I'm not so sure about the inclusion of covers of Bullet In The Head and Killer - you don't need it guys - your own material's more than strong enough. And wanna know your secret weapon? Attention to melody and harmony (albeit it gruff and raw-edged) - rare amongst punk-metal outfits. A tip of the hat to vocalist Mick and drummer Steve, who've obviously put a lot of time into this particular aspect.

There we have it - another gig under the belt of one of our finest rock bands. Given the time, I would get behind this lot 100%. But I don't even have one minute to spare. So it's down to whoever has the good sense, taste and vision to recognise a hot tip when they read one to sit up and take notice. Adrenalin Kick already work damn hard - they just need someone to put the business wheels in motion. Ball's in your court ...

Max

## SEAL

**Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**

Of course, we got Kiss From A Rose - and Killer, and Crazy. We also got a raft of interchangeable songs which seemed to seamlessly run into each other. Obviously, in a live setting, Seal leans more to the rock than the dance side of his talents. Although this may be more practical with a live band in tow, it robs him of the unique blending of the two genres which sets his studio work aside and above lesser seekers of the fabled cross-over.

With a stage set as bare as the big man's head, it can only have been his obvious enthusiasm and winning smile which kept the concert afloat, despite such homogeneity.

Andy Mabbett

## JETHRO TULL

**Symphony Hall, Birmingham**

Ian Anderson may no longer stand on one leg to toot his flute, and baggy slacks have replaced the once inevitable cod-piece, but he still has the manic air and piercing eyes of old and he can still put together a show to draw gasps of delight. The biggest challenge for a band of such longevity, still frequent visitors to the studio and with an audience easily spanning the generations, must be to find a satisfactory mix of old and new material. As always, Tull hit this nail squarely on the head, their first set being nearly all new material, until they surprised and delighted with an elongated Aqualung. Aside from a track from Brummie guitarist Martin Barre's forthcoming solo album, the

## NANCI GRIFFITH

**Civic Hall, Wolverhampton**



[Initially, adopt a Black Country accent] T'were a barmy October [sic. Autumnal] night in Wulver'ampton. Sadly, no red brick floor. Unusual atmospherics for the season. And then there was the Nanci G Acoustic Retrospective Tour. The one with the bassman, the combo drum/percussion kit and (the inevitable) James Hooker keyboard symphony. Electrically wired or what? On the plus side - Ron de la Vega swapped his electric bass for a cello on a couple of occasions. Lee Satterfield's mandolin and acoustic axe would have accurately fitted the billing, as did support act Frank Christian, with some classical influenced guitar pickin' on [his bouncy] Three Flights Up and [Nanci's, tell it like it is] It's a Hard Life Wherever You Go. Two acoustic workouts into this balmy night - the folkie autobio Workin' In Corners and Love At The Five and Dime - and I'm beginning to warm to the occasion, in more ways than one. Then it's wham bam, thank you mar'm and stickperson Pat McInerney's mutates into that Muppet, Animal on track three - These Days In An Open Book. He repeated the indigestible on a handful of tunes, as did Hooker, through the remainder of the show. Has somebody at MTV redefined Unplugged '95? Highlight of this patchy autumn night [in Wulver'ampton], was Nanci's damned fine newie Two For The Road [wonder if she saw the Albert Finney/Audrey Hepburn 1967 road movie of the same name, 'cos I've been seeking a video copy for years - oh, the fond memories of youth. The fantasies of the flesh]. Remind me to switch off come Atlanta '96, as we're [once again] gonna be assaulted ad nauseam by Julie Gold's From A Distance [someone should tell the Birmingham Evening Mail reviewer who wrote, and who originally published, that song]. Seems that FAD is the multi-lingual anthem of The Games, as performed by Nanci, Donna [Summer] and Raul [I'm a Maverick' Malo]. Some darned cats have more than nine lives ... and there's also the publishing revenue, if it's still assigned. Twenty two songs delivered, we departed in agreement. The late Kate Wolf is one of the sadly missed [patron] saints of folk music. Kate's masterpiece Across the Great Divide, Nanci's guitar and voice, made for a fitting final encore.

Arthur Wood