

BRUM

55p

the midlands music monthly and more!

BEAT

january / february 1995 issue: 168

aphrodisiac

***heather nova offers
an oyster***

plus:

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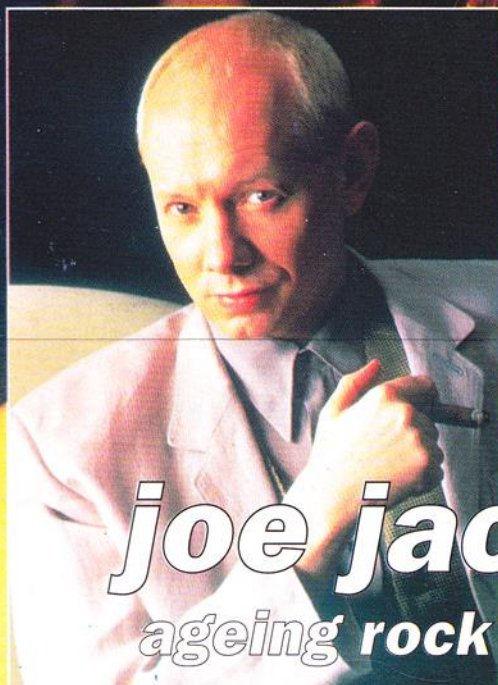
dog eat dog...

the gig guide...

reviews...

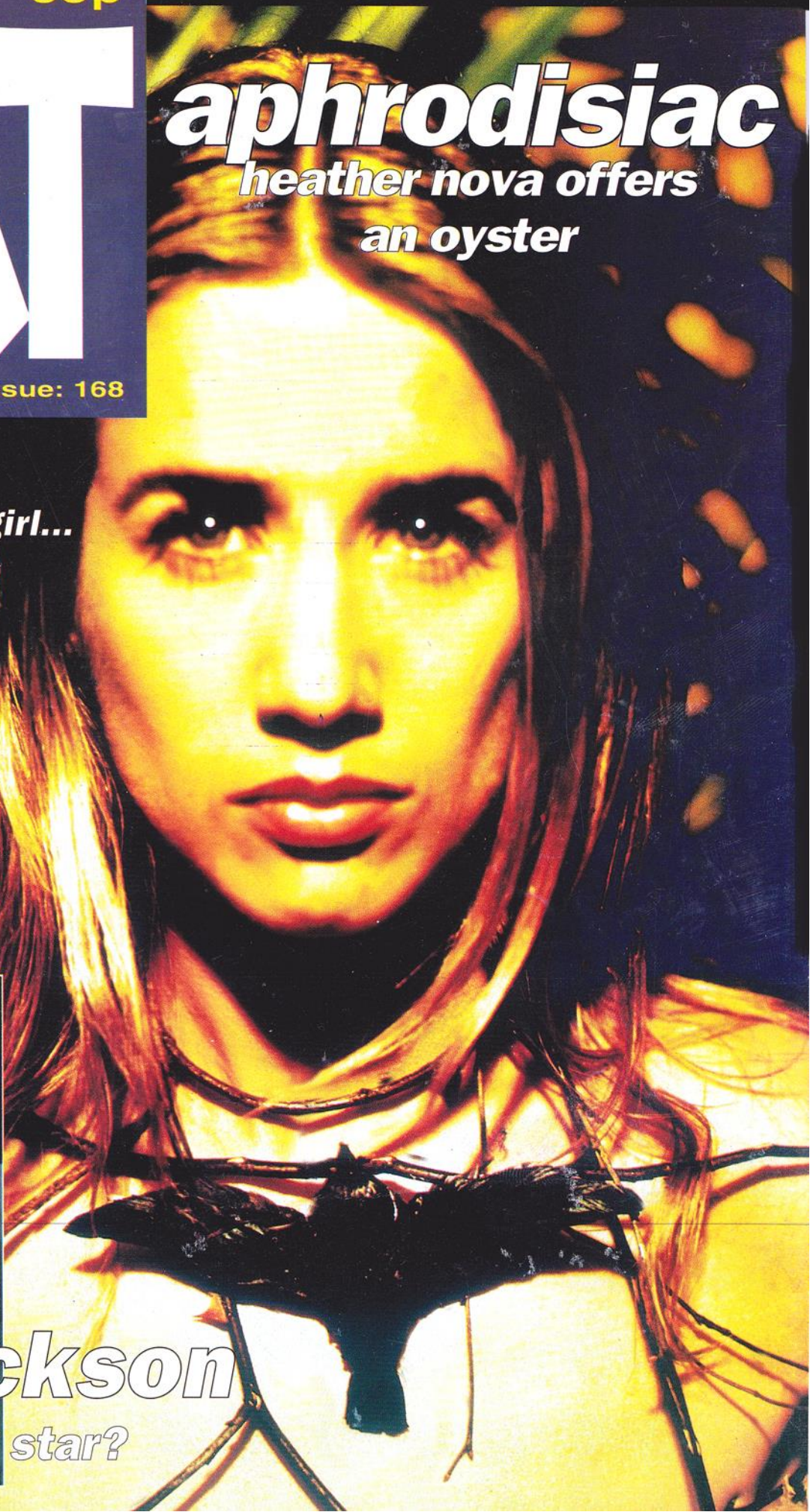
the pick of '94

and more



joe jackson

ageing rock star?



charge showing scant respect for the rules they made and the standards they apparently set?

Perhaps the most significant thing about 1994 was the avalanche of prime quality bootleg CDs that rolled into the select few record stores that really care about music. Discarding the legal rights and wrongs about such products (and according to Clinton Heylin's indispensable book, *The Great White Wonders* (Viking), that's a whole lot more complex a case than it may appear to be) they provided some of the year's gems. MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER Live In Austin, COUNTING CROWS Live In Europe, astonishing quality RICHARD THOMPSON, WATERBOYS out-takes - the list is endless. The best though were Artifacts Volumes One and Two by THE BEATLES; two five CD box sets, each with colour book shoe-horned with recording information and made up of unreleased Beatle gems from the vaults, TV shows, radio appearances and more. These eloquently tell the story of the most influential band of our time from birth (The

MAX

The resident rocker and possessor of the team's only pair of battle scarred leather pants, the demolition man and supporter of new live bands takes a predictably idiosyncratic look at '94

... Some year (aren't they all?). As life gets more and more bizarre and, for the most part, depressing, so the most astonishing music starts to materialise. '94 was another mad year stuffed full of gigs, records and happenings that enabled me to grit my teeth and wade through inordinate amounts of shit to '95. And '95 won't be any different: more craziness and plenty more creeps trying to grind you down. Oh, and I hazard that there'll be plenty more shit-kickin' sounds to freak out to as well. So Hey Ho! Let's Go!

THE BEST OF:

GIGS: Bitter Tears, Valve, Paw, Headswim, Raging Slab, Stabbing Westward, Huge Baby, Life Of Agony, Revolutionary Dub Warriors, Orange Deluxe, Reef, Stanford Prison Experiment, Mary Beats Jane, Carcass, Corrosion Of Conformity... **SOUNDS** (figure out who did what yourselves): The Holy Bible, Orange, River Runs Red, 4, Deliverance, Vitalogy, Forces You Don't Understand, The Church Within, Persona Non Grata, Ill Communication, Sore, Amora, Release, Flamejob, Crank, Mellow Gold, Flood, 13. **EVENTS:** Phoenix Festival, Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Glastonbury (not the fest.), West Cornwall, moving house (again!), birthday celebrations, my girlfriend's promotion, meal with Headswim, best mate's wedding, a new motorcycle, teaching, Bike Art and Road exhibitions, The Revenger's Tragedy and Entertaining Mr. Sloane at the theatre and the birth of many friends' offspring. I LOVE this job!

Quarrymen acetate of a Buddy Holly song) to the demise (the fractious Let It Be rehearsals). Perhaps the greatest significance is in the bloody nose these sets gave EMI who's (otherwise excellent) Live At The BBC looked pale in the shadow cast by these stupendous Artifacts. And towering over all of that was the arrival of young Jay Daniel in the summer; a total diamond!

ARTHUR WOOD

The mag's Texan in exile - even though his Scottish heritage remains clear. A man for whom singers of great songs form the foundation of an alternative religion. If a large man approaches you with tales of Austin ... you've been warned.

1994 ... Not just another twelve months ... Praise be to ... that precious concept Time, a.k.a. another damned fine MICHAEL SMITH solo album ... KATY MOFFATT and CHRISTINE COLLISTER, unchained at Lichfield Arts Centre ... ELLIS PAUL's King of 7th Avenue - the song of 1994, from his equally stunning collection Stories ... another rare event - THOM MOORE's latest solo offering Gorgeous & Bright ... ADAM DURITZ' vocal decent into helpless madness and his spiritual redemption at Wolverhampton Town Hall, all within the space of one song ... ANDY WILKINSON for his unflinching faith and his work of art - Charlie Goodnight - his life in poetry and song ... CORMAC MCCARTHY for best read of the year, a.k.a. volume one of The Border Trilogy, All The Pretty Horses ... the knowledge that DAVID ACKLES is alive, well, living in California and still active musically ... the recorded return of LEE CLAYTON, EDDI READER, MICK- EY NEWBURY, BUTCH HANCOCK and VINCE BELL ... TISH HINOJOSA's UK debut, plus GUY & TRAVIS CLARK - all on the same stage, on the same night ... record labels Glitterhouse, Philo, Dejadisc, and Watermelon for keeping up the faith and a standard which others would do well to imitate ... Fingerprint for their faith in the late, unique and phenomenal, MARK HEARD ... and finally, that filthy old rag DIRTY LINEN, still a wonderful, bi-monthly, cerebral experience ... and maybe this year we'll all have the luck of the angels ...

ANDY MABBETT

The Pink Floyd expert (as used by Q and author of books on the band - a new CD guide is due any day) is also



headswim

Brum Beat's classical guide and interpreter of reissues by those weird seventies bands you thought had retired.

ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

MARILLION Brave (EMI)

Perfect in every sense - I knew in March that this would be my album of the year!

ELVIS COSTELLO Brutal Youth (Warner Bros)

An unexpected return to form, and a promise of even greater things to come.

IAN McNABB Head Like A Rock (Silvertone)

Not only one of our greatest blossoming songwriters, but the first man to persuade Crazy Horse to work with someone other than Neil Young.

ENESCU Complete Orchestral Recordings (Olympia).

The first three volumes in this series by the great, criminally underrated Romanian composer have me craving for more.

VARIOUS Gypsy!

Forget disco, forget rave - this is the hottest dance music on disc - anywhere!

For me, 1994 was the year in which musicians and music fans alike embraced the Internet, the germ of the so-called "Global Information Superhighway". Not only is it now possible to join on-line discussion groups about every band from Pink Floyd to Suede, but we can read the thoughts of anyone from David Bowie to Aerosmith, and even the deranged rantings of Courtney Love, which would be funny were it not for the sad circumstances which generated them.

The more technologically able can now transfer samples or even complete recordings and we can all read record companies' own bulletin boards, listen to new tracks and even witness on-line performances. The first copyright deal for an on-line "jukebox" has already been struck, so users will soon be able to download and store complete albums, perhaps killing record shops as surely as CDs did away with vinyl. Using different technology, video-on-demand is also up and running in trial areas. All in all, the current capabilities are already awesome - but mark my words: what we've seen so far is only the tip of the iceberg.

ANDY TIPPER

When first he came to us, Mr. Tipper was a leather clad hard rocker searching for the holy riff ... somewhere in the Med came a musical road to Damascus and he's never looked back. He can without fear of contradiction claim to be our techno / trance / electronica / ambient expert - If only because to the rest of us, it's a foreign country!

THE BEST MUSIC OF '94

MICHAEL NEIL - Goodbye To The Greenlands

An unknown artist from Cornwall came up with not just the most beautiful and relaxing ambient music of the year, but the most emotional electronic music I have ever heard. There's so much feeling in the music it's overpowering.

ORBITAL - Impact (The Earth Is Burning). Live At Glastonbury

Enjoyed by thousands of earth revellers at Glastonbury and simultaneously soaked up by millions of C4 armchair ambient fans, Impact was the song that convinced the doubters that electronic music was a powerful live experience capable of delivering orgasmic excitement. The ultimate live version can be found on the Survival 2000 compilation album. Music to explode to.

TRANCE'N'DANCE (Slip'n'Slide Records)

The most enjoyable compilation album of the year. It's so thoughtfully assembled it manages to sound like a solo album. With a number of vocal tracks, this is undoubtedly the commercial side of the underground trance scene, but the quality is nevertheless exceptionally high throughout. Unbeatable trance with a 'pop' feel to it.

PLUS:-

Drop dead tracks like Red 2 by DAVE CLARKE; Gravitational Arch Of 10 by VAPOURSPACE; Two Full Moons And A Trout by UNION JACK; On (MuZiq mix) by APHEX TWIN and the self-titled dance track from FIRES OF ORK all proving that electronic music can create genuine, exciting classic material.

AND:-

Ambient experimental duo Chris and Cosey, otherwise known as C.T.I. providing some disgracefully hypnotic material on their METAPHYSICAL album and following up with the equally thought provoking CHRONOMANIC LP. And let's not forget albums by GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS and FUTURE SOUND OF LONDON, both providing some first class explorations of aural beauty.

And then - er, yes. Mr. Tipper then appends a list of some fifty or so albums, singles, tracks and live performances which made '94 such an ambient experience. Just what is 'e on? Ed.

HERBIE HANCOCK

The Complete Warner Bros. Recordings (Warner Bros.)

In 1972, having established himself as a member of Miles Davis' quintet, and with a wealth of fine solo material on Blue Note, Hancock signed his sextet to Warners. The three albums they recorded there (Fat Albert Rotunda, Mwandishi and Crossings) have been crammed onto this mid-price, double CD - presumably somebody at Warners was overcome with seasonal generosity. Despite interesting synthesiser on the latter album, it's a million miles from Rockit, and will please beginners and aficionados alike.

★★★★

Andy Mabbett

HOLI

Under The Monkey Puzzle Tree (Resurgence)

Take a Japanese vocalist (though she sounds more like a mid-Atlantic denizen of the Jazz Cafe and Ronnie Scott's scenes), put her with three quarters of Japan, add Level 42 guitarist Jakko and double bassist Danny Thompson and you're pretty much guaranteed of sophisticated, moody coffee table ambient jazzrock with oriental colourings. Which, of course, is exactly what this is. Beautifully groomed delicate songs about love, dreams and loss, poetic lyrics that include lines about floating on blue lakes like a lonely swan or hiding your doll behind the fort of thorns. And utterly without a trace of blood or passion.

★★ Mike Davies

RAY WYLIE HUBBARD

Loco Gringo's Lament (Deja Disc / Direct Distribution)

Hubbard, a one time country outlaw par excellence - we ain't talking music here, incidentally, but a lifestyle that would drain the colour from the faces

of most hard livin' heavy metallers - is now a more sober character and writing songs with a little more substance than his previous biggest hit, Up Against The Wall Red Neck Mother. Indeed his rootsy 'acoustic honky tonk' with its tip of the hat to Hank Williams might sound a little traditional to today's rebels.

His excellently observed songs, delivered with a road rasped voice and framed by Austin, Texas' best studio crew, are soaked in an honesty borne of his combatting his own demons. And that gives the album both a life breath and an edge that makes it a fine, compulsive listen.

★★★★ Steve Morris

SI KAHN

New Wood (Philo / Direct Distribution)

This seventeen track recording appeared originally, as the second release on the traditional music label, June Appal, way back in 1975. Four years later, Kahn made his first live concert appearance at the Chicago Folk Festival. His political leanings can probably be deduced from the name of his song publishing company, Joe Hill Music. Sparsely acoustic instrument wise, Kahn's totally self penned material focuses on us humans ... warts and quirks and all. Over the last couple of years, Kahn has occasionally collaborated as a songwriter with our own Eddi Reader.

★★★ Arthur Wood

WAYNE KRAMER

The Hard Stuff (Epitaph)

Every now and again, something like this comes up and you think, uh-oh, here's another opportunity for one of my underground heroes to make a jerk of himself by attempting a comeback.

But this is Wayne Kramer, baby! Hear that? K-R-A-M-E-R! Kramer! Yeah, ex-

MC5 overlord and all-round cool mutha. Kramer involved in some naff project? Nah! Fact is, The Hard Stuff is eleven tracks of funky, bad-ass metal. This is full-on, all-out rock, like the gutsy Edge Of The Switchblade, with the occasional slinky talkover set pieces like Incident On Stock Islands and So Long Hank.

He's back. And brothers and sisters, I want you to walk down to your local record emporium, put your hands in your pockets and purchase a taste of The Hard Stuff. Perfect noise to see in '95.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
★★★★★★★★ (can we run to that, Ed?) (Er, no! Ed.) Max

LITTLE AXE

The Wolf That House Built (Wired)



Born in Ohio of Native American descent, Skip McDonald grew up on jazz and doo wop. His pedigree includes a lengthy stint with the Sugarhill House Band backing the likes of Grandmaster Flash and Sugarhill Gang, a brief sojourn with Tackhead, and a co-production collaboration with Adrian Sherwood producing or remixing such names as Living Colour, Megadeth, PWEL, Gary Clail and Nine Inch Nails. Now he's the backbone of the Little Axe project, essentially a blues album

**recorded
delivery**

although one that takes excursions into dub, jazz, house, gospel, Asian, funk, and Native American. Samples include Leadbelly, Howlin Wolf, Son House and assorted unidentified sources, topics run from a tribute to hometown Dayton and a biographical portrait of Howlin Wolf to the usual blues subjects of inspiration, loss of direction and, er, the blues. Probably easiest to describe by running through a checklist of comparisons, so: Gil Scott Heron, Grandmaster Flash, Chamber Brothers, JJ Cale, Sun Ra, Temptations, Curtis Mayfield, Africa Bambata. Enough already. You get the message. Created for Mojo readers everywhere and probably, in its way, the blues album of 1995.

★★★★ Mike Davies

LO-KEY

Back 2 Da Howse (A&M)

Reflecting current, and welcome, moves in black street music, Lo-Key add a rap vibe to some old fashioned group soul singing. Damn fine singing at that. The grooves are group arranged and whilst the album is self produced, the cool influence of executive producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis is beneficially evident.

★★ Sam Mitchell

KIMBERLY M'CARVER

Inherited Road (Philo / Direct Distribution)

M'Carver's second solo recording opens with the title cut. The three protagonists in the lyric being Kimberly, plus her paternal and maternal grandfather's. Respectively a preacher, and

stereo gold award

Have you noticed how 'Remastered' has become the sales pitch of CD shifters? Yeah! But are you aware that in many cases it's a movable feast of a definition? See, whenever anything makes its debut on CD, or when a new compilation is collated, the product has to be mastered for the new format. Re-mastered, if you like. A couple of years ago whilst researching the very subject for a hi-fi mag I was surprised to find out that often the tapes used were simply those that came to hand in the company's archives; indeed one company told me that reissues of American material have been copied from commercially available CDs.

So, when Sony present us with the MASTERSOUND series, expecting us to fork out nearly £16 for titles we have, in all probability spent a lot on acquiring them as vinyl, audiophile vinyl and

original CD, do we laugh - or dig deep? And as many of the titles are available as mid price CDs at the same time is there anything more than pose value to be had?

Well, as you'd no doubt guessed, the answer is yes and no.

But first; what is Mastersound? It's simply a way of mastering CDs in a more accurate manner. The buzzword is 20 bit mastering, of which Sony's Super Bit Mapping variant was the groundbreaker. More than that, the company guarantee to use the very best master tapes available, something, as already noted, not always done. The original engineers and musicians are often roped in to maintain accuracy of sound, too. Finally, the discs themselves use 24k gold in place of the common aluminium as it's reckoned to deal with the laser reading system with more finesse.

So, to the puddings - and the proof ...

A measure of the care taken with the Mastersounds is reflected in MILES DAVIS' A Kind Of Blue. Up until this release the title had always been mastered from a faulty tape that rendered it, quite literally, out of tune. For this the

genuine original tape was searched out. The sound of the album is delicious.

Not so unreserved is the praise for BOSTON's eponymous '76 debut. It does sound clearer than the standard issue but that clarity reveals some rather splashy recording. As does JOURNEY's Infinity, a rather unimpressive 1978 Roy Thomas Baker production on which he attempts to repeat his Queen formula of the time. SANTANA's debut is an odd choice for the series launch; the superior Abraxas, which has been poorly served both as standard and (MFSL label) gold CD would have been better, though Evil Ways, Soul Sacrifice and Jingó's percussive onslaught does sound mighty fine. AEROSMITH's classic Toys In The Attic is another aural beneficiary, coming across as a much more detailed and powerful album.

JANIS JOPLIN's Pearl allows the lady's legendary voice far greater space than the original, and in comparison, rather poor CD does, whilst making the band sound tighter.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN's Born To Run displays one of the pitfalls; the sound is much more detailed, but some of that

detail is the clarity of the overdubs and edits. The title track is virtually disassembled in front of you, and to a degree that destroys the illusion. Jungleland, however gains in epic majesty.

A huge improvement is made to MEAT LOAF's Bat Out Of Hell, a record that I've always thought sounded emasculated whether on vinyl or CD. The Mastersound adds, to get technical, the necessary bollocks whilst letting the instrumental flourishes and E Streeter Roy Bittan's piano shine brightly.

But the highlight is ROBERT JOHNSON's King Of The Delta Blues Singers. Mastered from recently found unplayed test pressings, these 1936 and 1937 hotel room recordings of Johnson's voice and guitar are presented as so clear and intimate as to be downright spooky.

On balance, the conclusion is proceed with caution. You really need a pretty good hi-fi system to drag the best out of these discs, and you need to be a fan of the artist to pay the premium price, but, if you care enough to do so, the best of this batch are genuine revelations. Roll on the next batch.

Steve Morris

recorded delivery

a seller of home-made shoeshine, both were travelling' men. These days, Kimberly's inheritance is the opportunity to take her rhymes and tunes 'on that road.' Cassidy Jane was inspired by the whore, Ella, in Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate*. [One day, that movie will be lauded as a classic. At the time, it financially wrecked United Artists]. Elsewhere, there's the never ending love of these Dancin' Fools, the Waiting for love, as well as the haunting but ultimately untouchable, *Midnight Angel*.

M'Carver's albums have been produced by Rounder/Philo head honcho, Ken Irwin, employing in the process, the cream of Nashville's acoustic pickers. Both gestures stand as a testament to the man's faith, in this lady's music. Having served her apprenticeship in numerous Houston, Texas cover bands, Kimberly penned her first song a decade ago. She entered the Kerrville New Folk Songwriter's contest in 1988 and has been a mainstage regular ever since. Four long years on from *Breathe The Moonlight*, M'Carver returns with a veritable tour de force of melody and magic. The Waiting was truly worthwhile. Welcome home.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

TAJ MAHAL

An Evening Of Acoustic Music (T&M / Direct Distribution)

You could mount an argument that Taj Mahal is a black version of Ry Cooder; except that Mahal eclectic pursuance of the blues highways and byways has maintained a more rough hewn feel in place of Cooder's sometimes academic cool. Here, using guitar, piano and banjo he explores, with a little help from Howard Johnson's whistles and tuba, the work of Robert Johnson, Reverend Gary Davis, Mississippi John Hurt, Howlin' Wolf as well as a fair selection of his own songs. The joy is the manner he brings himself to the legends whilst flavouring his own work with their legacy. To hear *Dust My Broom* throw away its crutches and dance is a fine testament to the man's skills.

★★★★ Steve Morris

MOTORCASTER

Stay Loaded (Interscope)

Loud, distorted, grungey rock with the added bonus of a corny, but great Mellotron weirding out in the background and some pretty nifty steel guitar work on Farah. Straightfaced though, stands head and shoulders above the rest as *A Bloody Great Rock Song*. *Stay Loaded* also has one of the most colourful covers of the year.

★★★★ Max

THE MOVE

Message From The Country (BGO)

Even though The Move's last album was recorded as the three members - Roy Wood, Jeff Lynne and Bev Bevan - were already assembling the more adventurous Electric Light Orchestra, it brims over with inventive ideas, whistleable tunes and a cool Elvis pastiche. If it only had a few cellos, it could easily be regarded as the first ELO album in all but name. Presumably, when sleeve-noteist John Tobler refers to Birmingham as 'Britain's so-called second city', it's only because he knows it's really the first.

★★★★

Andy Mabbett

MY LIFE STORY

Mornington Crescent (Mother Tongue)

Originally due last June, this is the debut album from Jake Shillingford, a lad with grand ambitions to be a symphonic version of Blur fronted by Scott Walker. Unfortunately while things begin in promising form with *You Don't Sparkle In My Eyes*, his mannered Artful Dodger whine rapidly pales and by the time *Angel* rolls around with its cellos and woodwinds you find yourself realising that Jeff Lynne may have been a Beatles rip off but at least he knew a thing or two about overblown orchestral arrangements. The fan club's called *Sex & Violins*, which, if the embarrassingly puerile (toothpaste tube as ejaculating penis, wow) paintings by brother (?) Alan didn't give the game away, more or less sums up the concoction on offer. Fair makes you want to rush out and buy a Marc Almond album it does.

★★ Mike Davies

ELLIS PAUL

Stories (Black Wolf / Import)

I've always been a sucker for songwriters who regale us with inventive tales. Their *Stories*. In my time, I've been an even bigger sucker for song-poets who paint neat [punch]lines ... the gin controls whole conversations and plays magic tricks with her feet ... [All Things Being the Same], If you could paint her, she'd be a Picasso. She's got a few things out of place.... [Here She Is], I lost her name with the poker game, but her face I'll never forget ... [3,000 Miles], I'm pistol, a forty-five ... now the finger on my trigger hasn't seen it's sixteenth birthday ... You see, guns don't kill people, it's the bullets that do [Autobiography of a Pistol]. Got the idea? Well, what you've just had, is a mere soupçon of Ellis Paul's *Stories*.

King of 7th Avenue which appeared on Christine Lavin's recent compilation *Follow That Road - 2nd Annual Vineyard Retreat*, also turns up here. My estimate, is that it is probably the best song I heard during 1994. And there's more. River is a well considered eulogy. His legacy speaks, in the canister rooms, in the archives of great studio halls. Even though ... his death

has made critics of us all, let's hope that another phoenix will rise from the ashes.

Available by mail order from Black Wolf Records, P.O. Box 2692, Cambridge, MA 02238, USA

★★★★ Arthur Wood

TOM PAXTON

Wearing The Time (Sugar Hill / Direct Distribution)

The business of music being what it is, there's a tendency for Paxton to be seen as one of two things; the sentimentalist of *Last Thing On My Mind* or the witty politicist of the pre Dylan folk era. Both views denying his continuing worth. That's something this Jim Rooney set addresses, revealing Paxton as elder statesman in the line that delivers John Gorka, Nanci Griffith (both of whom give sleeve endorsements) and Iris DeMent (who adds harmonies).

★★★★ Steve Morris

KEITH POWELL

The Keith Powell Story (Sequel)

Birmingham's Keith Powell seems to have been a man permanently out of time. Not only did he choose to cover *It Keeps Raining* almost three decades before Bitty McLean but his recorded work between 1963 and 66 when he was Brum's beat king caught him in a dilemma. Five years earlier it would have been easy to make him a pop star - he did / does have a fine voice - but the beat boom and the coming of The Beatles changed the rules. Consequently we can hear him floundering between soul stylings, Gene Pitney drama and Scott Walker class. Problem was, it seems, they got the material he needed.

More a tale of what might have been than straight nostalgia.

★★ Sam Mitchell

THE RAINDROPS

The Complete Raindrops (Sequel)

In essence a collection of demos by pop writing legends Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich. Classic stuff too, with many of them destined for The Crystals, Darlene Love and Ronettes' Phil Spector produced masterpieces. Sadly, for them, this was 1963 / 64 and such production line pop marzipan was about to be chewed up and spat out by the Beatle influenced self contained groups. Ironically most of them would model their songwriting craft in large part on the Barry / Greenwich model they usurped.

★★ Steve Morris

TOM ROBINSON BAND

Power In The Darkness / TRB Two (Cooking Vinyl)

Budget reissues of what appears to be punk / new wave nostalgia from 78 / 79 until you read the sleeve note of *Power* and find this from Eric Idle; "The Tories believe that the basic freedoms are being eroded: freedom to avoid paying income tax; freedom to hang people; freedom to censor books, plays & television."

Robinson's literate music still has a lot to say too.

★★★★ (each) Steve Morris

DAVID SANBORN

The Best Of (Warner Bros.)

Rock and pop saxophone can be very cheesy indeed (ask Kenny G. or Scott Page) and the instrument is usually more at home in an orchestra or jazz band. Sanborn's contributions to the work of Roger Waters (Pros & Cons of Hitch Hiking), David Bowie (notably *Young Americans*) and on Michael Kamen's *Concerto for Sax and Orchestra* are notable exceptions. So it's a pity that this album falls mostly into the former category, with only one or two slightly bearable cuts stepping out of muzak mode.

★★

Andy Mabbett

COSY SHERIDAN

Saturn Return (Waterbug Music / Import)

Thro' the last decade, numerous American, contemporary folk/country songwriters have proved that they can sustain a recording career without the [sometimes asphyxiating] restriction of signing to a major label. Maintenance of independence by the artist, usually guarantees a maximum paycheck for the listener. New Hampshire's Cosy Sheridan, being another case in point. What's more, this lady delivers her[s] [points] with humour, as well as the kick of a mule. The final effect being found entirely on the need.

Car Phones and Airplanes surveys the act of buying/not buying into the high-speed/hi-tech rat race that is the nineties. Turbocyte [best to pronounce this one phonetically], enters a zone of the female body which you can probably figure out for yourself. Once that itch starts, best not ... The desperation to devour comes in many forms, even though that Roadfood could have been festering under the car seat for weeks. Jerry Short's *Ol' 2 Lane* explores the simple and full life which us humans were once allowed to savour in a time now long gone. This reviewer was somewhat uncertain, following the first couple of spins through Cosy's third solo disc. The closing cut *Walk Into Heaven*, kind of sums up the jury's final verdict.

Available by mail order from Waterbug Music, P.O. Box 6605, Evanston, Illinois 60204, USA.

★★★★ Arthur Wood

HANK SHIZZOE

Low Budget (Cross Cut Records / Direct Distribution)

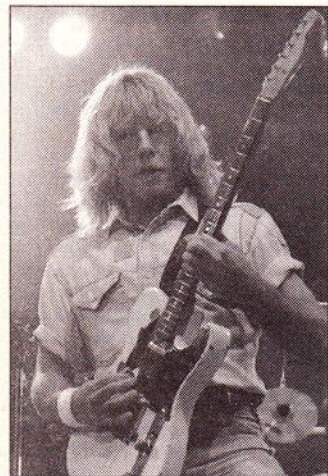
He may sound like some strange breed of country dog, but Hank S. is a Swiss blues man (an altogether odder breed, on reflection) and this is a CD compilation of his work to date. Inspiration may come from Mark Knopfler, he includes an early Straits number, *Six Blade Knife* and J.J. Cale who's *Mona* gets an airing, but he tempers that somnambulist effect with some

live

busy, Neil, I don't mind depping) then you would have Lone Young, or Neil Justice, or indeed Thrum. You don't need me to tell you what guitarist Johnny Smillie looks like; denim shirt, hair in his eyes, dessie boots. Neil Young the younger, incarnate, grafted to a Bigsby tremolo arm atop a suitably tortured Les Paul. Monica Queen is a tiny, tiny little person with contemporary Madonna hair un-do, one of Björk's frocks, little red plastic clogs and black socks. She looks great. The sound is a furious controlled wall of noise, Monica's Epiphone meshing with Smillie's splendid guitar mangling, his twin Fenders flapping and thumping as he applies layer upon layer of screaming distortion to the fray. Each note trying vainly to get airborne, struggling to find the thermals to bear it to the sky, but they do, and when they take flight, so do you. What am I on? Anyway, Monica's tortured vocals lend the perfect colour, Maria McKee turned up to 11. Ought to mention Dave McGowan on bass and Gary Johnston on drums as well because they're splendid.

Rifferama: order it, it's through Pinnacle. Derek (not a mate of the band) Eynon

STATUS QUO NEC, Birmingham



If Quo possess predictability it is most noticeable in their habit of touring annually around Christmas. Both lesser and greater bands would do well to reward their fans equally.

Of course there are the oft repeated jokes of three chords, as if all music were not based around the same structures or ever repeating chords. Indeed Quo left this legend long ago, though it's questionable whether they were wise to do so.

Quo's greatest crime is to believe their rock'n'roll days are dead and gone. An album of rock anthems could easily be compiled from their early seventies work and be far superior to those on offer. A scan of this crowd reveals the band's con-

tinued 'rock credibility' and their appreciation of the goods that Status Quo effortlessly provide. Extended lead-break intros and tortured medleys are the order of the night as Quo strive to confirm their status, crowd pleasers extraordinaire.

The band are not restless, merely meandering. Their future is in three, to four, chord anthems, in repetition, in rock'n'roll. If only they knew it. Paul Flower

MIKE SCOTT

Wulfrun Hall, Wolverhampton

A low key announcement that The Waterboys are gone and that Scott will, in future sail under his own flag. But that doesn't mean casting overboard the treasure so far collected. No, armed only with guitars and keyboard Scott's solo voyage touched on all the old gems revealing songs of great stature even without the big music arrangements. Big in heart is big enough anyway, Mike.

We also saw glimpses of next spring's solo set and a song in progress about Scott's dreaming that The Beatles reformed (Lennon an' all) to support Guns 'N Roses and that they were crap. He admitted that even he's not sure about that song.

Wouldn't it be something if he abandoned the idea of forming a touring band and became the troubadour that he obviously is - for real. Steve Morris

THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY

Library Theatre, Birmingham

Exciting stuff. The opportunity to witness Cyril Tourneur's early C17th archetypal example of Elizabethan and Jacobean Revenge Tragedy as performed by the recently-formed (1992) F.O.D. (stands for Forest Of Dean - where it's based) Theatre Company.

Revenge Tragedy satisfied an Elizabethan audience's desire to see moral wrongdoers get their comeuppance - especially if the perpetrators were from the upper classes - and in the goriest ways possible. In some ways, thriller novels and horror movies have continued the tradition.

From the outset, Vindici (meaning 'revenger of wrongs' - the main characters in the play have names indicating a particular trait) vows revenge on all and sundry, then systematically goes about putting it into practice, before coming to a sticky end himself. Louis Dempsey as the angst-ridden Vindici is superb, as is Jon De Ville as the perverted Lussurioso.

Although faithful to the text, director and company founder, Nick Bamford put the actors into jumbled modern dress, which by turns gave off vibes of jack-booted Nazi SS, Victorian England and the Ital-

ian Mafia. The result was effective and lent the play more relevance to our C20th sensibilities (Tourneur's plays are easier to understand than Shakespeare's anyway, as they were written with us 'ordinary folk' in mind, rather than the court).

F.O.D.'s policy is to 'provide engaging and accessible productions of classical plays', which indeed they do. An exciting, hilarious and macabre performance. Max

SANDHOPPER / BUFFLE- HEAD / ANDY PORTEOUS

Flapper & Firkin, Birmingham.

"A male Kristin Hersch" reckoned Sandhopper's Alex of Andy Porteous. And he was quite close to the mark. Andy's solo, semi-acoustic set of well-written and well-performed, sad, 'alternative' folk songs were very much in that mould. Emotive and palatable.

Bufflehead have added a human drummer since I last saw them and Martin really does make a difference. He's tight, but adds a fluidity impossible to replicate on a machine. Resplendent in Santa hats, the Buffs kick off their festive, end-of-year set with Gyroscope and then shoulder into Backdrop - an archetypal Buffleheads song - blasting loud sections balanced by soothing washes. Frustration and Raking It In highlight their Stookey and Space-men 3 touches, while Kick Me Down is more punky. Wreck is probably my fave - Justin's strangled vocals leading a raunchy guitar fest. They end with the VU-like (except for the vox) Shimmer and leave the stage vibrating to feeding-back guitars propped up against amps. Perfect. It may be slightly unfair on Sandhopper to call Bufflehead the band of the night, as I suspect the former are capable of much more than tonight's rushed and sloppy offering. It may have been to do with the night and the audience wearing thin by the time they hit stage, but they chopped their set left, right and centre, so I wasn't entirely sure where I was apart from the opening Instrumental #1 and the catchy enough New England. And I had to leave before they finished, so I don't know whether things picked up. Come to think of it, I know Sandhopper are better than this, because I've heard their demos - it's neat stuff. Not the best of nights for them? I reckon so. Maybe next time. Max

KATY MOFFATT

Arts Centre, Lichfield

Whenever I need to affirm a faith in real music I recall a night eight years back, watching Tom Russell, Richard Dobson, Nanci Griffith, Pat Alger and Katy Moffatt swap songs. At around 3am, Katy picked up a guitar and stunned us all

SAW DOCTORS

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

The diagnosis? Buy the records, avoid the gigs. On disc The Saw Doctors brand of Irish traditional Beatle Buddy Holly pop with sharp lyrics is, when they avoid the schoolboy giggles, fine but live they pander to an audience which is a degree away from stifling them. The perceived (real) cracksters love of drink and good time has attracted the Gary Glitter crowd who understand only that facet of the band; anything less than raucous or bawdy being an excuse to loudly chatter or barge to the bar. And how many of the Tuam cheerers have been anyway their mythic Nirvana? I'm not being a bore but if this continues the potential is simply going to be suffocated out of the band by a set of gits that actually deserve The Whisky Priests.

Sam Mitchell

OASIS

Civic Hall, Wolverhampton

Probably the loudest gig I've seen in, well possibly forever. 22,000 ear shrivelling, unnecessary watts. Dunno, maybe it's all part of the band's two fingers to the world attitude - attitude that, according to my mate John, you could scrape off the floor. But musically Oasis stunningly confirmed their newcomers of 94 award against all comers. And they do it with a simple manifesto; a believable back to basics if you like. They are a group; guitars bass and drums with vocals. And the guitars are defined, proper rhythm and proper lead, a harmonic heartbeat and stinging hooks whilst the engine room runs like a prime tuned motor. Look at the drum kit; you'll find no hi tech racks of unused pose here, it's four square ringorama.

The killer is of course the songs. Tunes that blend yesterday and today into pre familiarised hits for tomorrow.

But then, having bottled off the Hendrix sampling support The Beautiful People, the Oasis partisans pogo the highest for the guitar squall drenched I Am The Walrus. But they would. They're so young they think it's new. Which is why they seem to miss the humour when Liam actually inserts The New Seekers coke jingle in full into that song!

with a slow burnin' and bluesy rendition of her brother's song, Slow Movin' Freight Train.

Katy opened her two song encore at Lichfield, with yet another heartstopping version of the latter number.

Undertaking this her fourth UK tour in as many years, through two sets, Katy featured half a dozen compositions from her latest Round Tower / Watermelon release, Hearts Gone Wild as well as performing I Can't Be Myself (When I'm With You). The latter song being her contribution to the recent Merle Haggard tribute release, Tulare Dust. Along the way, the diminutive Miss Moffatt pitched in a couple of new compositions, including one co-written with her 1986 Kerrville buddy, Tom Russell. The Sparrow Of Swansea charts the sad downfall of Dylan Thomas. Katy's The Midnight Radio is undoubtedly autobiographical, and includes a couple of melodic references to those Jimmy Webb classics, By The Time I Get To Phoenix and Wichita Lineman. Every single time that I've observed Katy introduce and perform Billy Collins, a heart rending tale of corruption in the fight game, she manages to remain on the tightrope and in control of her emotions ... but only just. It's also one of those songs which never fails to send a shiver up my spine ... as in, there but for the grace of God go I.

Which, in a way brought me back to the events described in the opening paragraph, and in particular, Richard Dobson. To paraphrase Don Ricardo, there's nothing truer than a powerful and controlled voice supported by pieces of wood and steel. On that basis, there's nothing finer than Katy Moffatt in concert.

Arthur Wood