

Records

Echo and the Bunnymen Ocean Rain WEA

From the vanity of the Crucial Three only the Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch has emerged with his credibility intact. Julian Cope has slipped into the comfortable berth of psychedelic avatars of the 80s with the occasional piece of mediocrity (*World Shut Your Mouth*), thrown in, and Wah's Pete Wylie never really moved out of the small talent bracket.

Mind you touring with the Bunnymen hasn't been an easy passage. *Crocodiles* remains as one of the greats, but *Heaven Up Here* and particularly *Porcupine* needed to crack Mac's impenetrable world.

From there *Ocean Rain* is a brilliant chill, the end product of three albums' development, of trial and error and finally belief.

"I know it sounds arrogant but I basically believe that I'm right. I can't put it into words most of the time, but it's just a knowledge of being certain, of seeing things the way they are." (McCulloch, 1982)

Ocean Rain continues Mac's method of using natural elements as images and themes for his pessimistic morality. From something burning to something raining the Bunnymen's albums

are linked by Mac's unusual passion flow and its expression.

Musically, they have progressed from the guitar thrill of *Crocodiles* through the denser textures of *Heaven* and *Porcupine* to the beautiful, expansive acoustic/orchestrated moods of *Ocean Rain*. 'The Killing Moon' points the way to the similar ambitions of 'Nocturnal Me', 'Seven Seas' and the title track. And although this is impeccable Bunnymen music they're not scared to borrow from the best: 'The Yo Yo Man' has Mac recalling the intensity of Morrison (that's Jim), 'Thorn of Crowns' could be Velvet Underground and 'My Kingdom', complete with stutter, bursts out with a guitar fury that would make Arthur Lee smile.

Scattered through the songs there's the odd line that is important in conveying Mac's state of mind. On 'Silver' he sings "man has to be his own saviour" and on the dark 'Nocturnal Me' he gets more personal — "take me internally/forever yours nocturnally." But it's on the title track that the lyrical key to the album lies: "My ship's a sail/Can you hear its tender frame/screaming from beneath the waves." Think about it.

Ocean Rain is the Bunnymen's best album. It has all the symptoms of being a classic and it's easily the first crucial album of 1984.

George Kay

Judy Mowatt Only A Woman 3rd Degree

And about time too. This is the first major local reggae release in

this country in a good couple of years, and we can only hope it's the precursor of many more. Reggae fans are heartily sick of bankrupting themselves on the import market.

This is Judy Mowatt's second solo album, an admirable follow-up to 1980's outstanding *Black Woman*. Mowatt takes a stronger feminist-political stance than either of her fellow former I-Threes. While Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths have both had greater commercial success on the singles charts, Mowatt has chosen her own course. Her message is Rastafari from the woman's point of view, one seldom aired in a culture which remains essentially patriarchal.

In the title track and 'I Am Not Mechanical', Mowatt chides her Rasta brethren for not giving women the recognition they deserve, continuing the theme of her first album. 'Got To Leave The West' and 'Think' have an even wider global perspective; without equality in all things, we must perish. But Mowatt retains her faith always, and 'King of Kings' is a loving devotional song. She also does a lovely interpretation of Curtis Mayfield's 'You Don't Care'. However, her finest vocal performance is the ballad 'Trade Winds', when you start wondering why she spent so long singing backups. Mowatt provides part of the answer in her own songs. She produces herself and the backing, naturally, is by JA's finest, including several ex-Wailers. Buy, buy, buy...

Footnote: This album is released through the American Shanachie label, and has been released locally by Virgin.

Shanachie also has albums by Augustus Pablo, the Mighty Diamonds and the Heptones, to name a few. Will we see any of these?

Duncan Campbell

The Cure The Top Fiction

To earn sympathy through music you've got to win your way into hearts by pleading your case with some kind of passion. Over the past four years Robert Smith has instead opted for an introverted coldness which has invariably left the Cure shivering outside.

The Top is the Cure's first album since 1982's *Pornography* (excluding last year's singles compilation *Japanese Whispers*) and while it isn't drowned in doom like that and its depression-drenched predecessor *Faith*, the record doesn't exactly provide joyous listening. 'Piggy In the Mirror' and the title track both see Smith trudging along his well worn path of self pity. Paradoxically, when there is an attempt to introduce some warmth, as in 'Birdman Girl' and 'The Caterpillar', the results are merely monstrous meanderings.

The metal anger of both the opening track 'Shake Dog Shake' and 'Give Me It' is needlessly bogged down in psychedelic murk, while the military tinge colouring 'The Empty World' fails to lift the song from the ordinary. Only the jaunty 'Bananafishbones' and 'Wailing Wall', complete with Arabian guitar strains (Smith looking back over his shoulder perhaps?) serve to retrieve the album.

Musically, the Cure seem incapable of taking off on tangents as throughout *The Top* they rigidly plod on down the centreline of their gloomy tunnel. No prizes for guessing whether there's a light at the end of that either.

Shayne Carter

Joe Cocker Civilized Man Liberation

Well, after his first ever American number one, plus a Grammy, plus an Academy Award, the man's not about to alienate any new listeners. Nor the old faithfuls either if he's smart. And he is.

Civilized Man has got a smoother surface than had *Sheffield Steel*. That hard-hitting Nassau rhythm section has been replaced by, for half the album, Los Angeles sessioneers and, for the other half, a Nashville crew. This isn't to suggest a softening up however. While the overall sound may be more generally marketable, the arrangements are nonetheless strong. Besides, that voice would prevent any performance from mawkishness. There's tenderness, delicacy even (hear 'Long Drag On A Cigarette'), but the essential grit is always there.

The choice of material caters to all Cocker's varied audience, and the album flows very well through an impressive range of styles. Each side begins with a rocker and moves to a close with a slow ballad.

Cocker's choice of cover songs remains astute. Sometimes in the past his remakes have transformed the originals, at other

times merely served them. The versions here of Squeeze's 'Tempted' and B.B. King's 'Hold On (I Feel Our Love Is Changing)', while not marked departures are certainly soulfully rendered.

On the front cover photo Joe looks a little concerned, but turn the sleeve over and you get a shrewd smile. Fair enough too. *Civilized Man* is not only a wise career move, it's a fine album as well.

Peter Thomson

Orange Juice Texas Fever Polydor

So — a mini album from the Boys Who Used To Wear Shorts — well, they've got trousers on now, but fortunately they're still rolled up to just below the knee.

Orange Juice have been tuneless, aimless, unsoulful and precious BUT occasionally absolutely charming. It's the same on *Texas Fever* (a cattle disease, no less, and a metaphor for the decline of the West and capitalism. Far Out.) They completely bomb out on 'Punch Drunk' (Edwyn Collins sounds like Bowie, for godsake, a la *Lodger*) and 'A Sad Lament' (grunge grunge), but the remaining four toons are OJ on form with jingles, jangles, pips, squeaks and Zeke Manyika (thankfully) on backing vocals. Check out 'Craziest Feeling' and 'A Place In My Heart' for your regulation dose of 80s 'boy loves girl, boy's heart caves in' schmaltz.

Don't be fooled though: OJ are purely momentary. Dammit, nothing here really sticks — make this your silly purchase of the week.

Fiona Rae

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