



# Records

## Annabel Lamb The Flame A&M

To a lot of folks, myself included, Annabel Lamb's *Once Bitten* seemed one of the most exciting debuts of 83. Her strong melodies, fresh instrumentations and commanding range of styles suggested an impressive new talent. Second time out, however, Lamb's originality and diversity have become considerably restrained, possibly in an attempt to secure a wider audience. The well honed FM-format of the title track for example, may well gain Lamb radio action but it's at the sacrifice of her identity.

Elsewhere on the album only 'Dream Boy' employs the haunting, torchy approach so successful on the jazz-tinged tracks of her debut. Even the lyric writing, while still smart, seems less sharp. (Her previous perspicacity on sexual politics is now reduced to the easy paradox of say, "so lucky in bed, so unlucky in love.")

All this is not to suggest that the album is a failure, just that

Annabel Lamb's spark of originality has been tamped into more of a flicker than a flame.

## Peter Thomson

### Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark Junk Culture Virgin

OMD at their best mix an arresting blend of ponderous art set off by sheer pop ebullience. *Junk Culture* is an emphasis on the latter and is their least pretentious (and most consistent) effort since *Organisation*.

The artsy-gimmickry's been reduced to orchestration rather than structure and the Kraftwerk influences have been dropped in favour of more state-of-the-chart trends (check the scratch techniques of 'Tesla Girls' and the Wham-like swagger of 'Apollo'). Brian Tench has replaced Mike Howlett at the controls and the result is one superbly produced and played piece of pop vinyl. The synth programming and arranging is some of the best in the genre, set up, in turn, against the bustling background of Malcolm Holmes' man/machine drumming.

Pity then that much of the material doesn't merit the treatment. Many of the tunes sound incomplete (or worse, recycled) and at times teeter on formula. The lyrics range from trite to patently stupid and McCluskey's voice makes Marc Almond sound positively operatic.

Despite the flaws, the majority

of ideas are used with verve and flair, holding interest when the songs don't. While there's nothing of 'Enola Gay' or 'Souvenir' quality here, the best is still quality stuff. 'Tesla Girls', 'Never Turn Away' and the other worldly instrumental title track are better than average radio fare.

All told, a reasonable OMD set but lacking the extra gem to set it apart.

## Andrew Rockwell

### The Dream Syndicate The Days of Wine and Roses Slash

A good album. A rock album. As in solid. As in what you do with a cradle. That is, it is substantial but not static. A good rock lasts, doesn't wear out quickly. Often even the most marvellous of rocks looks very much like a lot of other rocks but durability counts for a lot where uniqueness is not absolutely necessary.

A good album. A guitar album. As in accidental overtones and harmonics. As in power coexisting with fragility. That is, it is 60s deprived but not redundant. Guitars are only one step removed from acoustic music, physical rather than electronic, a string vibrating rather than a chip doing whatever chips do.

Enough preaching. All I know about this band is that they're West Coast American, have a reputation for being the Velvets reborn, recorded this in September 82 and have a drummer

(Dennis Duck) who was last encountered by me on *Voices of the Angels*, a poetry double album from LA. As to the Velvets comparison, two tracks sound very VU but another starts very like the Fall. Someone said the Stooges are an obvious influence, but only at second hand, by way of the Saints. Check out the title track and 'Then She Remembers' and marvel that the ultimate Aussies were loved by someone in LA.

Anyway, fuck comparisons, odious as they are. Lead singer and guitarist Steve Wynn wrote all the songs and sings each one uniquely, using different vocal effects and delivery to suit his open-ended if unremarkable lyrics. Dunno which guitar he plays but one is uncannily reminiscent of Reed/Morrison or very late 60s John Lennon and original too. The other is more Westerly. Karl Precoda plays the one Wynn doesn't. They both enjoy simplicity garnished with distortion, feedback and dubious pitch. Loud, mostly. The Nico of the band, Kendra Smith, plays what sounds like an early 60s semi-acoustic bass. She sings 'Too Little, Too Late' magnificently, somewhere between Iggy's one-time cover and Allison Statton of YMG. Dennis Duck drums with intensity, energy and economy, which is more than a lot of his peers can do (especially those of an electronic nature).

The band is realistic, unforced.

The songs are more than good. The recording is natural and creative, a perfect combination. The record is almost two years old. What are they doing now? I dunno, but I'm gunner find out.

## Chris Knox

### The Blue Nile A Walk Across The Rooftops. (Linn Records)

A non-postcard Glasgow band, three piece The Blue Nile, bring a little imagination and subtlety into the formula world of synthesiser commercialism and funk banditry that calls itself rock 'n' roll.

Space and colour, not unlike the best of Japan's unself-conscious moments, dominate the classy 'From Rags To Riches', 'Automobile Noise' and 'Heatwave'. Speed it up and 'Tinseltown In The Rain' and 'Stay' balance poise with Paul Buchanan's cool vocal lines, a calm David Byrne. The Blue Nile need taste and patience, but they're worth it.

### Blancmange Mange Tout (London) Dear Diary.

Today I listened to the second long playing record by Blancmange. Actually, I was quite looking forward to it as their debut contained some quite catchy (if hollow) little ditties. The trouble is I can remember bugger-all of that record. The dearth of good material offered on *Mange Tout* suggests I'll remember this one even less. Only perhaps 'Don't Tell

Me' and 'That's Love, That Is' have much merit and even then they sound very familiar. All of which is a shame because Arthur and Luscomb seem to have an unflagging sense of humour. But that's not why they chose to cover Anderson and Ulvaeus' 'The Day Before You Came' — it was, of course, out of sheer admiration.

### The Scorpions Love At First Sting (RCA)

The Scorpions have refined their Euro-American FMetal to a skilful blend of melodic crunch and metal ballads that's paying big dividends worldwide. They currently vie with Judas Priest as kings of the heavy metal roost. Without a dud track in sight, this is an excellent hard rock album by any standards. With the guitar solos clipped for maximum impact, a very slick production job (Dieter Dierks) and classy cover (Helmut Newton) the Scorps have all bases covered.

### Saxon, Crusader (Carrere)

Saxon continue to hone their sound in their quest for the Big American Breakthrough, and with *Crusader* surpass last year's 'Power and the Glory' on all counts. They've slowed the frantic approach to a solid, deliberate pace more suited to their style. The lyrics are still pretty puerile but when your ear-drums are pounded with stuff this heavy I presume it hardly matters. Good to see one of Britain's better metal outfits back.

# Tina Turner

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