

Records

Various Artists Go Go Crankin' Island

By now most of you would have discovered this very dangerous groove for yourselves. Go Go is born-again funk; if, like me, you think James Brown is God. Well Go Go is a religious testament to Brown's teachings. The whole funk and nothing but the funk. Chuck Brown and His Soul Searchers and Trouble Funk are the true grand-masters, but younger bands like Mass Extension and E.U. also know how to crank at an evil pace.

My fave rave has to be Trouble Funk's 'Let's Get Small', a call to celebrate and party y'all — such a groove has never been heard. When the Trouble Funk crew 'Drop the Bomb' you know you've been hit real bad.

Behind the grooves, Go Go is a mighty cultural explosion, the true voice of black Washington. This is protest music, born from the '68 riots, all hot and ready to "burn baby, burn!"

I really can't imagine any New Zealand Go Go bands, but at least we've got this mighty compilation — and, I hope, more releases to follow.

(PS: Unfortunately, the track listings on the cover don't follow what happens on vinyl. The Mass Extension and Redds and the Boys tracks just aren't there. The album is to be re-pressed with the two missing tracks replaced.)

Kerry Buchanan

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark Crush Virgin

OMD albums wax and wane with a mechanical reliability and by my tide charts this album shouldn't be bad at all. In a pop-world of love epics, OMD are the briefest of telegrams: "I Love You Stop More To Follow Stop". The "something more" that tends to separate the great from the greatest, of course, never arrives, but their brevity and precision I like.

'Crush' is a return to the three-chord pop songs of their first album, avoiding the textbook technical clutter of *Dazzle Ships* and



Go-Go stars Trouble Funk.



Redds, Redds & the Boys.

the laboured arrangements of *Architecture and Morality*. It has simplicity, speed and a lot of longing; the best tracks possess the bullseye whimsy of last year's infamous 'Tesla Girls'. 'Women III' is a *tres* tight piece of have-not moralising, 'Secret' is cute to the point of Altered Images (!) and

'Bloc Bloc Bloc' exhibits a sense of humour that has returned only recently. Even 'Rain', the doorest track, has a jaunty emulor underpinning akin to the debut album's 'Dancing' or 'Red Frame/White Light'.

OMD are not, however, the reliable mechanics that made the As-

sociates so important, nor are they born of the heady sentimentalism that makes Scritti Politti the bitter-sweet conquerors they are. OMD are ideal radio popstars who have at last learned not to over-extend themselves; *Crush* is an album you greet with open arms and questions that don't pry *too* closely. An 18 carat love affair it is not; the title could hardly be more apt. Buy it, enjoy it, but don't mistake want for need; the latest wave of *really* good music is hidden a lot deeper than this.

Chad Taylor

Various Artists Tommy Boy's Greatest Beats Polydor

It always amazed me how little material was actually released here during the breakdance craze, but I suppose it's better late than never. Here are 15 classic tracks that reflect the cultural and rhythmic changes in black music.

It begins with the historic 'Jazzy Sensation', version of Gwen McCrae's 'Funky Sensation'; just as Sugarhill's 'Rapper's Delight' used the rhythm of Chic's 'Good Times', Tommy Boy borrows and changes McCrae's rhythm, using it as a base to rap over. 'Jazzy Sensation' is important as it broke away from the dominant Sugarhill/Enjoy rap sound, totally changing the beats and using electronic sounds in a new way.

Every cut is amazing, there is nothing weak or second rate here. But there are some true standouts, like Keith Le Blanc's cut up of Malcolm X's speeches, Baker and Bambaataa's fusion of Kraftwerk and an obscure break record called 'The Mexican' to create 'Planet Rock', and G.L.O.B.E. and the Whizz Kids' ultimate dedication, 'Play That Beat Mr DJ', a song that just about sums the whole thing up.

Other gems include the Force MDs crooning their way through 'Let Me Love You', and a great mixing job in the Tommy Boy Megamix. At the moment this compilation is only available on tapes, but hopefully vinyl copes will follow.

Essential to own in any shape or form.

Kerry Buchanan

Steve Garden, Ivan Zagni Trouble Spots Ode

A unique New Zealand album. An intellectual "concept" album, no less, with 11 "Trouble Spots" illustrated with a suitably tense set of musical styles. Shall I tell you about 'em? Why not.

'Elbow Room': Young women (Zagni) write to 'Dear Abby' (Garden) about their adolescent sexual problems. The disturbed questions are backed with stumbling, disorderly music (reminiscent of Gentle Giant), the glib answers by an ironed out version of the same. Finally the sound of lovemaking as the "dialogue" jabs on.

'Double Circle': Lovely native bush percussion from Don McGlashan but it goes on a bit.

'Cat and Mouse': If the drumming is the mouse and the slightly pedestrian guitar the cat then the cat wins. Not fair really.

'Arkin Dahba D'Geehan': An intellectual's 'Exodus' theme interrupted by a tape loop of a splash. What more could you want?

'Nicaragua': Hank Marvin visits a South American market and discovers harmonics can eradicate crowd noise.

'Brian Tries': A mentally and physically disabled young man learns to walk. Zagni seems satisfied with his progress.

'Four For Two Bob': A sort of sequel to the above with a similar xylophone motif. Could be Brian can't afford a cabbage (sausage?), anyway he's at a market but there's no sign of Hank.

'Punch and Judy': Lots and lots of Peter Scholes' puppet music with Gentle Giant overtones once more.

'Beirut': Not obviously Middle Eastern or anything really.

'Through the Gate': From minimalism to late Mahavishnu to angelic vocals. Wow! Peace, man. 'Alone But For You': Back to reality with some nifty stuff sounding like the 50s electronic/*musique concrete* experiments of Milton Babbitt and Henri Pousseur.

All in all a beautifully recorded and inventive album (all eight tracks). It dips into banality at times but the quirkier (the majority) are nifty. Congrats to Ode on their bravery, but how about a single of 'Brian Tries' b/w 'Brian Tries'?

Chris Knox

Bob Dylan Empire Burlesque CBS

The teaming on the Live Aid concert of Bob Dylan and dogeared Rolling Stones guitarists Ron Wood and Keith Richards was, to my mind, a triumph. The media generally chose to ignore the moment.

Surely no one can deny the triumph of *Empire Burlesque*, perhaps Dylan's most carefully crafted studio album. The attention to detail works for, not against, Dylan's forward motion. Mostly the album strikes sparks that bring to mind 1974's marvellous *Blood on the Tracks*.

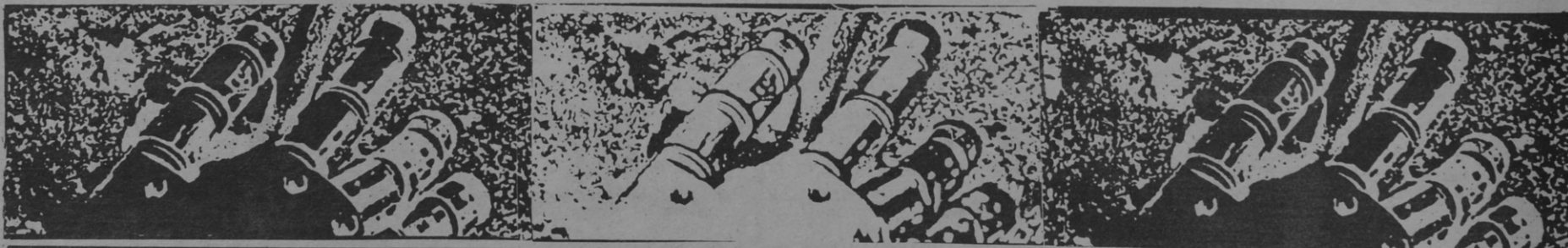
Dylan is surrounded by session mates of recent times, Dunbar and Shakespeare, Mick Taylor, Ron Wood and, especially, Mike Campbell, Benmont Tench and Howie Epstein from Tom Petty's *Heartbreakers*.

Oddly, only one track really fails, 'Never Gonna Be the Same Again', where Dylan is most like Petty (a reversal). The opening track is the rubber-band rhythmic 'Tight Connection To Your Heart' and it is probably a fair barometer to how a new listener might react to the record. For those with a taste for a more primitively rocking Dylan, try the boogie of 'Clean Cut Kid', in which Ron Wood's rock 'n' roll lines match Dylan's sneering/crying vocals.

Closing the album is a "troubador" track, 'Dark Eyes', featuring the faraway Dylan of acoustic guitar and racked harmonica. Sounds good.

Ken Williams

Do da Coruba.



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