

Records

Paul Kelly and the Coloured Girls Gossip Mushroom

Australian Paul Kelly is in a similar position to Bruce Springsteen a dozen years ago. A critic's favourite, but it's taking a while for the public to catch on, and there have been a few personal low-points along the way as well. Kelly pulled himself out of one with his self-financed *Post*, and although it was widely acclaimed, its low-budget production prevented it from reaching a large audience. Locally Pagan Records have seen fit to re-release the album of evocative images of urban Australian, and it's well worth a listen.

With *Gossip* however, Kelly may finally have a breakthrough. Back with a major company, he has



Paul Kelly & the Coloured Girls (L-R): John Schofield, Paul, Steven Conolly, Michael Barclay, Peter Bull.

produced a work of major significance — a double album, with no less than two dozen songs. A bold move, but Kelly has pulled it off — the quality of his songs sus-

tains your interest, and though it's going to take a while to get beneath the surface, I have a feeling that by then, I'll be glad we haven't been denied the extra tracks.

In another age, Kelly would be a singer/songwriter, but with the subtle and tight rock backing of the Coloured Girls, the songs are fleshed out from the sparseness of *Post*, and Kelly's given the opportunity to display his influences.

And he wears them on his sleeve — Buddy Holly, Gram Parsons, Robert Johnson, Hank Williams, the Everly's, but most of all the Beatles and Dylan. The single 'Before Too Long' is as refreshing as the Pretenders once were (I've been singing it for weeks), and at the sharper end of his palette, 'Down on My Shoulder' is the fuzz guitar of the Kinks to Holly's B.V.s. Kelly's got a sardonic pop voice, similar to Dave McCartney's nasality, but with more edge. The catchiness of his tunes hides their grim content however, there's a lot of pain behind his pop melodies, and lyrically the album is packed with detail on contemporary urban life: families, lovers, and the streets of small towns.

Like the Hunters and Collectors

or the Go-Betweens, Kelly reflects the best qualities of Australian music. He's sensitive, aware, and eclectic, and therefore doesn't fit in to the mainstream mould of Australian music. It's far too rich a country for the INXSs to dominate, and Paul Kelly's *Gossip* reflects that cultural diversity. I'll be listening to it for some time.

Chris Bourke

Iron Maiden Somewhere in Time EMI

This is Maiden's finest hour. From the opening 'Caught Somewhere in Time,' to the last notes of 'Alexander the Great,' (a bit of ancient Greek history for you), they prove that they're the top metal band around. Gone is the odd duff track that appeared on just about every previous album, when they tended to get bogged down with the total concept. This album is just non-stop, head-banging mayhem from go to whoa.

The production, courtesy of

Martin Birch, is again exemplary, the bottom end (Steve Harris is using bass synth on several tracks) feels like a punch in the chest from a sledgehammer. Also, the twin guitars of Dave Murray and Adrian Smith show a new maturity and a dimension I thought they were capable of, but hadn't heard before. Nicko McBrash's drumming is powerhouse, never over the top with pointless fills and rolls which tend to get in the way of the often intricate melodies these two guys pull off. And good old Bruce Dickinson is singing his lungs off, again demonstrating a power and clarity I haven't heard before.

Stand out tracks include the new single 'Wasted Years,' 'The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner,' and the epic 'Alexander the Great,' but overall it's just a superbly crafted album. The cover itself is totally over the top, it shows not only are they serious about their music, but also haven't lost their Cockney sense of humour.

Greg Cobb

Taj

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