

Records

The Housemartins London O, Hull 4 Chrysalis

In Britain this album's had reviews you couldn't buy. Comparisons with the Undertones at their best, the Beatles and even Al Green have been heaped on this harmlessly named four-piece from Hull. Student radios in this country have been thrashing 'Sheep' and 'Happy Hour', and all three of the Housemartins' singles have just been released locally.

Housemartins-mania it isn't yet, but if media consensus can create public demand then this band's gonna take off. The question is just what the hell is all the fuss over?

"We are probably one of the most political bands around at the moment. Not one of our songs is about relationships," said vocalist/lyricist Paul Heaton earlier this year. This political bent plus their Marxist beliefs stitched onto old anoraks and duffle coats and their well-publicised dislike of London and its associated hype have

made them really credible to the media intelligensia.

And some of their songs are very lively and very clever; 'Sheep' is a pretty smart commentary on human stupidity and it pops with Undertones' charm; 'Get Up Off Your Knees', their best song to date, is a well-aimed blow at the apathy over the gap between rich and poor; and 'Anxious', 'Sitting on a Fence' and 'Think for a Minute' are tidy songs with tough political messages.

Reservations spring from the fact that the band is at full stretch to carry the album. Slower songs like their first single 'Flag Day' and the laboured gospel of 'Lean on Me' don't clear the runway. And over the span of 11 songs ('Reverend's Revenge' is an instrumental) Paul Heaton's impishness is irritating and the band's playing is too cute and bubbly. Musically great bands are made of sterner stuff. Maybe they'll get there, but this doesn't.

George Kay
George Clinton
Best of ...
Capitol

The figurehead of funk, Clinton has preached to us about faking it, failing it, and of bumping your rump to it. He painted the White

House black and replotted the universe according to Starchild. It's been one hell of a trip. This is an album of his best since he went "solo." Even though Clinton has never actually written a good song. Instead he makes sweat, fidgety feet and locoweed chants. This is junk food beat, and for some reason, which you can work out for yourself, this is great funk. 'Atomic Dog' is still one of his best to date, it begins the album, but it's a pity we can't have his rap version for cross-reference. From the second album *You Shouldn't Nuff Bit Fish* we get three tracks, 'Quickie' and 'Last Dance', which are both sublime and ridiculous, and 'Nubian Nut' which is a twisted African joke, a rap for all the Felas. From *Some of My Best Friends are Jokes* (a title I can identify with) comes 'Double Oh-Oh', a track I've only just come to appreciate for its roaring drums and "take that!" lyrics. From last year's *R&B Skeletons in the Closet* we get the title song and 'Do Fries Go with that Shake', which is the first Clinton song in a while I can truly say is shit.

This is a good compilation, well chosen from his recent works. I don't know if Clinton is going to break the funk sound barrier again like he did in the old days. But he can't make a fool of himself like James Brown frequently does,

mostly because he's always been a fool. For showmanship he's still a brilliant man, and for funk he still keeps the books. For insanity, this man is a genius.

Peter Grace
Shriekback
Big Night Music
Island

Showcased on last month's tour, the English band's fifth album sees Shriekback gunning for the jugular of the popular music market. They wanna be big, but they wanna do it their own way.

The departure of Carl Marsh means that all singing and lyrical duties were handed to Barry Andrews. He appears to relish that rôle. As well as producing the LP with Gavin McKillop, the album is stamped all over with the enigmatic Andrews' signature — from "Zen pop songs" to joyous celebrations of existence and animals, *Big Night Music* revolves around his interests.

Fame is an integral part of those interests, and to that end come songs like 'Gunning For the Buddha', 'Pretty Little Things' and 'The Reptiles and I'. They all display Shriekback's mellow heart, and (especially 'Gunning For the Buddha') their pop sensibilities ...

The big noisy numbers, as always on Shriekback records, are

outnumbered here, but still show up forcefully in the form of 'Sticky Jazz', 'Black Light Trap' and 'Running On The Rocks.'

I like this as a whole, late at night. Then, it's a whole story like Sun Syat-Sen might tell. But at other times, it is less seductive and too pretty. The album title says it all though, and in the end, *Big Night Music* tells me things and I like it.

Paul McKessar
The Pretenders
Get Close
WEA

This is definitely the best Pretenders (aka Chrissie Hynde) album so far. However that in itself isn't saying much. After all, by far the strongest tracks on each of the previous three albums were those which had been the previous year's singles (a fact which made the debut *Pretenders* album the most successful because it had the most singles to draw on.)

But *Get Close* is the best for a number of reasons. For starters Martin Chambers, surely one of the crassest of the major league drummers, has been dumped. Secondly, although the credits and photos assure us there's a new and stable four-piece line-up, Ms Hynde hasn't felt bound by it. Her band may now sport a black

rhythm duo but the album also includes appearances by an Elvis Costello bassist and a Simple Minds drummer. Furthermore, a crucial feature of the album's sound is the tasteful keyboard work of Bernie Worrall, member of the George Clinton conglomerate and recently with Talking Heads' funk ensemble.

The singer is in her best form ever, strong and assured without relying on those vocal mannerisms that once proved irksome on her slower performances.

Which brings us to the songs. Fully half of the eight originals — the two that lead off each side — are up with her best work, and for Chrissie Hynde that's an extraordinarily high strike rate. Of these four, the current single 'Don't Get Me Wrong' is decidedly the most upbeat. Hynde's writing increasingly seems to favour slow to medium tempi. The album's one really successful outright rocker is an ambitious cover of Jimi Hendrix's 'Room Full of Mirrors.'

Get Close is a new kind of Pretenders album, and not just because it preceded any associated singles. It is the clearest and most consistently agreeable expression of Chrissie Hynde's talent yet on record.

Peter Thomson



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THE JAYREM RECORDS COUNTDOWN

THIS MONTH	LAST MONTH		
1	5	A Reggae Christmas Various Artists	RRS-004 TC-RRS-004
2	1	Fay Lovsky Fay Lovsky	JAY-325 TC-JAY-325
3	NEW	13th Anniversary Live In Japan The Residents IMPORT	AIM-1006
4	4	Mona With The Children Doug Cameron	SNAP-1203
5	NEW	He Waiata Mo Te Iwi Aotearoa	JAY-327 TC-JAY-327
6	2	Free Dirt Died Pretty	CITLP-504 TC-CIT-504
7	17	Doctor's Orders Dr. Feelgood IMPORT	FIEND-29
8	3	E Hine Aotearoa	JAY-139
9	NEW	Reggae Blasters Volume 1 Various Artists	GETI-10 TC-GETI-10
10	9	Weird Culture Weird Custom National Student Radio Compilation	NSR-1 TCNSR-1
11	NEW	Fast Women and slow Horses Dr Feelgood IMPORT	JAZ-W-1001
12	8	Return Of The Bluesbreakers John Mayall	AIM-1004 TC-AIM-1004
13	11	The Cutting Edge Low Profile	FR-4
14	6	Speed Of Life Smitherens	SNAP-1201
15	13	Electrical Storm Ed Kuepper	HOTLP-1020
16	NEW	Rodger Fox with Bill Reichenbach & Gary Grant Rodger Fox Band	CIRCULAR-9 TC-CIRC-9
17	12	Brutal Black Uhuru	RAS-3015 TC-RAS-3015
18	7	Dancing In The Dark Cool Daddy	SNAP-1204
19	NEW	Walkin' Together Rodger Fox & Mike Booth	CIRCULAR-10 TC-CIRC-10
20	22	The Legend Marilyn Monroe	CC00016 CC00016C



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Review of New **KAWAI K3** Digital/Analogue 8 voice synthesiser

While the new generation of digital Synthesisers were heralded for their brilliant clarity of sound and features such as touch sensitivity, many musicians felt that creating useful programmes on an analog synth was difficult enough, especially when trying to make fine adjustments on stage. The new Kawai K3 has certainly gone a long way towards 'user friendly' technology by combining wave sampling with true synthesis ability. It utilises 32 built in wave forms which are produced by 2 oscillators and then passed through the Filters, LFO's and envelope generators which we are familiar with on analog synths.

An added bonus for the keen programmer is the ability to create and store your own waveform by

assigning relative amplitudes for 32 harmonics. Editing and creating sound is a breeze due to the clear front panel layout on which all parameters are written, and the simple dial arrangement.

The K3 has completely programmable touch and aftertouch controls as well as six stereo chorus settings. This Synth has the warmest, richest string sound I've heard on any digital machine and all the wonderful crystal clear percussive sounds you would expect as well.

The one feature that is truly astounding is the price, only \$2855 (including GST) and worth every cent.

RICHARD HALL



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