

INTROSPECTIVE/PET SHOP BOYS

INTROSPECTIVE/PET SHOP BOYS

THE DANCE LP OF THE YEAR

50 STUNNING MINUTES
OF HOUSE REMIXES

DOMINO DANCING — 7.40
ALWAYS ON MY MIND/IN MY HOUSE — 9.5
LEFT TO MY OWN DEVICES — 8.16
I WANT A DOG — 6.15
I'M NOT SCARED — 7.23
IT'S ALRIGHT — 9.24

EMI

LP • CASSETTE • CD

Records

MELISSA ETHERIDGE
Melissa Etheridge
(Island)

After a bevy of bimbo's hogging the limelight in '87 this year has seen some notable debuts by serious and talented women musicians (Tracey Chapman and Toni Childs being the most obvious). Now here's another. Melissa Etheridge is a Kansas-born graduate of Boston's Berklee College of Music who was spotted, and promptly signed, at a barroom gig in L.A. by Island boss Chris Blackwell.

The album was essentially recorded live in the studio with Etheridge supported by bass, drums and her own acoustic guitar. And while various instruments — electric guitar or keyboards — were added later, the backing retains the aggressive directness that also characterises her writing. Performed in a voice of raw emotion, Etheridge's songs explore some of the less attractive aspects of sexual passion. The narrator of 'Similar Features' seethes with jealousy, contempt and defensive egotism at the prospect of her lover with another woman. Such titles as 'Chrome Plated Heart', 'Precious Pain' and 'Don't You Need' clearly indicate their subject matter.

Musically the moods vary more widely. The raging desire of 'Bring Me Some Water' is set to hard-rocking backup that would delight FM radio (in fact both 'Water' and 'Similar Features' sound like potential hits). On the other hand Etheridge's vocal on 'Occasionally' is accompanied only by the beat of her hands on the guitar back.

Such confidence is characteristic of the strength of *Melissa Etheridge*. The album's power is also indicated in its sleeve design. Against a plain red background stands a woman in black trousers and a leather jacket. Her head is thrown back and her fists are raised. Is it a gesture of anguish or exultation? Either way it is vehemently assertive.
PETER THOMSON

THE RAILWAY CHILDREN
Recurrence
(Virgin)

From Wigan, the dangerously named Railway Children had all the initial signs of being another faceless, characterless foursome from the anaemic British indie scene. On *Factory* last year they released *Reunion Wilderness*, a record that typified the earnest but forgettable nature of most new English provincial "talent". But it was well received, well enough to encourage the band's bright boy Gary Newby to take up an offer from Virgin.

Recurrence is their first record on a major label and although it falls well short of divine immortality, it has a host of songs that rise above the plainness of Jamie Lane's production. The niftiness of the opener 'Somewhere South' betrays their REM roots and Newby's guitar then rings into a very tasty 'A Pleasure'. Then 'Swallowed' which begins with a fairly powerful admission: "You can twist me in your hand / Or close me up like a pocket knife" with guitars chiming underneath giving Newby's vocals the required bite.

The second side is a shade more sedate with the first two songs 'In The Meantime' and 'Over and Over' recently appearing as remixed singles, the latter being a very palatable moan about political apathy in the face of personal problems. The last song worth singling out is 'Monica's Light', an unassuming effort based around a very plaintive chorus with Newby promising "I know, I won't tell a soul". Nice.

The Railway Children deserve a bit of



Railway Children

attention but they're on a cleft stick in that they're too damn durable to sell records and they're regarded as too anonymous by the minority wiseguys. Shelve the preconceptions and help Newby raise money to stay on Virgin and make another album — two Microdisney commercial failures in one year would be two too many.
GEORGE KAY

JAMES BROWN
I'm Real
(Polygram) (Tape/CD release)

JB is the world's greatest soul singer, but his essence is rhythm. Like a heat-seeking missile he seeks the beat, drags it from his hiding place and rides it to death. This is JB's transcendental nature, he brings out the meaning of music, shows us its heart. In his autobiography he talks about the significance of 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag':

"I had discovered that my strength was not in the horns, it was in the rhythm. I was hearing everything, even the guitars, like they were drums."

Which brings us to *I'm Real*, his best studio album in over a decade, and a modern interpretation of the beats that made him what he is today. The funky drummer in 'She Looks All Types A' Good', the Get On The Good Foot of 'Can't Get Enough' and the popcorn feel of 'Static'. This is a much more traditional JB album than *Gravity* and at the same time his most modern sounding, using the past to define the present.

The success of the album has a lot to do with Full Force, who produced, wrote and arranged all but two tracks. They are, like all black musicians, sons of JB. The rhythm that JB laid down from the mid-60s (the birth of funk in Out-a-Site and Papa's Bag) is the spirit that haunts all black music in the 80s. They know JB as well as he knows himself, and tracks like 'Time To Get Busy', 'Keep Keepin' (with great Maceo Parker sax) and 'Can't Get Enuf' stand up to anything JB has done in the past. Certainly a labour of love, as the vocal intro of 'Tribute' states, but they don't let that cloud their purpose, JB is a hard man in the studio, if he don't like it, he's outa there. But they have managed to project their version of JB, aligning it with his own. It's a perfect working relationship, even on slightly off the wall tracks like 'Godfather Runnin' The Joint' with the human voiced drum kit.

So many stand out tracks, but the classic has to be 'I'm Real' with JB telling them copycats "take my voice off your

records until I'm paid in full!" JB has got busy with Full Force and made one of the best albums of his long career. He's still the hardest working man in showbiz and hopefully will be for decades to come.

KERRY BUCHANAN

PATTI AUSTIN
The Real Me
(Qwest)

This writer first became aware of Patti Austin when she featured on Quincy Jones' 1981 album *The Dude*. However the sleeve of *The Real Me* carries a photo of a pre-teen Patti performing on stage with a big band, so small she's standing on a chair to reach microphone height. And there's another shot of the same little girl with her godmother Dinah Washington.

The album's song choices reflect a similar perusal of Austin's past. Included (along with sleeve-note references to the recordings that serve as 'inspirational source') are renditions of a dozen, mostly classic songs. Of course this sort of homage to the heritage — Gershwin, Kern, Porter, Ellington, etc — has become something of a cliché with modern vocalists. But while Austin and her arrangers stick fairly reverently to well-known interpretations they are also mostly avoid the stultifying genuflection which has mired some other such exercises (eg Ronstadt). 'They Can't Take That Away From Me', for instance, merges its laid-back swing with lazy funk.

There are also a few lesser known songs which sit well with their prestigious company. Particularly welcome is one of Jim Webb's songs from the 1969 Thelma Houston album *Sunshower*.

Any artist whose career has been guided by Quincy Jones invariably makes albums that are produced to hell and back. Austin is no exception but thankfully the richness is rarely obtrusive. In fact, occasionally the production values even provide a bonus, for example Austin's multi-tracking on 'Mood Indigo' allows her to attain the harmonic richness of Ellington's original.

All in all then *The Real Me* project constitutes a success for Austin. Since working on *The Dude* her albums have largely been redundant attempts at MOR meets hyperfunk (yes, there is such stuff). This time she's shown that by returning to her past Patti Austin may have found the means to move her career forward.

PETER THOMSON

APOLOGY

Due to an unprecedented demand in Australia (where it has jumped to #10 on the charts!) the previously advertised MELISSA ETHERIDGE album will not be available until 21/11/88. We apologise for the inconvenience, but music like this knows no deadlines.



FESTIVAL