

# Records

to be used to club someone outside a pub than a musical instrument.  
GREG JOHNSON

## FROM SCRATCH Gung Ho 1,2,3D (Flying Nun)

For those who don't remember or didn't see at the time From Scratch are/were a bunch of blokes and a whole load of PVC pipes, mate, whose ranks include musician, actor, and part-time genius Don McGlashan. Throw in a few chimes, drones, tuned drums and a warbler drone for a background and you have the picture. This album is the complete recordings done in 1982 and released in part in the same year.

The sound of From Scratch is not without melody but naturally relies on rhythm more than anything. It can be dangerous to listen to this sort of thing in the car or on yer motorbike as the more you listen the more vague you become until eventually you will find yourself in a state of hypnosis and at that point you aren't really concerned with things like traffic lights and the last thing you want to do is slow down and change the pitch of the engine which is in time at exactly 103 km/h.

*Gung Ho 1,2,3D* is remarkable in that it is a permanent record of one of this country's best ever experimental groups. For a group like this to have created enough energy to tour and record successfully is a minor miracle in a world where a PVC pipe is more likely

## THAT PETROL EMOTION End of the Millenium Psychosis Blues (Virgin)

There's probably enough of us around to vote that Petrol Emotion as the best band on the block on the strength of last year's *Babble* alone. Pop with a hard core and a bit born through living in Northern Ireland resulted in a music that was uncomfortable, jagged but accessible enough via Sean O'Neill's gift for melody that could cut through crap like a laser through candyfloss.

On *Millenium Psychosis Blues* Sean and brother Damian have become retiring figures leaving the legwork to the rest of the band, particularly drummer Ciaran McLaughlin and guitarist Reamann O'Gormain. A big mistake or maybe a bit of enforced democracy, whatever, Sean O'Neill's output is confined to the first four songs and it's no coincidence that they're by far the best. 'Sooner Or Later' squirms hard but tunefully, 'Every Little Bit' is an electric ballad with 'Cellophane' getting ambivalent with acoustics and accordion and words like 'I can only find the murder machine', leaving 'Candy Love Satellite' to riff like a cousin of 'Big Decision'.

The rest of the album gets nudged towards disposability by three funky

manoeuvres — 'Here It Is, Take It', 'Groove Check' and 'Tension' — that probably soothe the band's conscience into thinking that they're being contemporary and that this is a new direction for the band, man, but in reality the result is convenient tedium from writers who haven't the tunes to back up the rhythm. As a final peace offering 'Under The Sky' is a fair apology that is strident enough to start re-worrying the apathetic nerve-ends. But in this case last impressions aren't lasting enough to compensate for an album that's only halfway decent and so well-below the upward curve that marked the trail of *Manic Pop Thrill* and *Babble*. An O'Neill dictatorship is now overdue.  
GEORGE KAY

## SUAVE I'm Your Playmate (Capitol)

The last year has definitely been the age of newjack in the dance/soul stakes, with what seems like dozens of young hipsters getting the Armani pressed and heading for the studio. Suave would seem to have an edge over most of the pack, his first single, a nicely updated version of the Temptations' 'My Girl' hits big, and he has the right connections in the form of the Bobby Brown/New Edition axis, yet somehow this early promise hasn't really carried through in the album.

Suave makes all the right moves, he's got a smooth L.A. feel to the production, tosses in the obligatory James Brown samples and a couple of heartfelt ballads, but the overall sound is almost too smooth and cohesive, there's not enough of the quirkiness that made 'My Girl' stand out.

There are definite signs that the promise lives on, though. 'I Wanna Please You' and 'Playmate' bop along nicely, begging for 12" remixes, but basically *I'm Your Playmate* could have used more funk and less production to make it with the big boys. Still, anyone who puts a woman wearing a rubber dress and playing basketball in his video shows definite creativity.  
KIRK GEE

## LYLE MAYS Sweet Dreams (Geffen)

Considering that Mays has been keyboard player with guitarist Pat Metheny's group for several years it is hardly surprising that he should make albums so similarly styled. Both musicians specialise in silky-smooth, flowing jazz that is consistently pleasant listening but often barely memorable afterwards. The *Sweet Dreams* title may suggest — and the contents largely deliver — more of the same but there's greater variety displayed here than on Mays' last album.

First there is his selection of versatile sidemen. Bill Frisell adds his masterful guitar to three tracks and the various bass/percussion teams (including a Keith Richards producer and ex-Weather Reporter) are equally exemplary.

Then there is the material. The only failure is Mays' solo track which sounds like a pretentious adaptation of some music school exercise. Otherwise the

opening track boasts a seven-piece horn section on a riff that recalls Steely Dan at their most laidback. The horns are increased to nine for a lazy swing number that is quite unlike Mays' fare and all the more welcome for it. The title sequence is in four sections, features a substantial orchestra and runs to over 20 minutes. It may not be earth-shattering but it's always enjoyable.

And that's about where Mays' music stays. To some listeners her (and Metheny) get dismissed as providing what jazz buffs use as muzak. But that's unfair. The quartet interplay on a number such as 'Hangtime' lifts proceedings well above snide putdowns. There's a valid place (and time) for Lyle Mays. Try partaking of *Sweet Dreams* while relaxing in the sun with a glass of something cool.  
PETER THOMSON

## DIAMANDA GALAS You Must Be Certain Of The Devil (Mute)

You who thought trilogies died with 20-minute displays of guitar virtuosity are in for a rude shock. *You Must Be Certain Of The Devil* concludes a trilogy by the name of *Masque Of The Red Death*. The album is dedicated to people with AIDS but if you think that's a tad gloomy check out lyrics like 'The arms you cut off that Saturday night... forsaken by the blood of Jesus, invites the Devil, who now waits for me.' All the lyrics are related to AIDS but Galas sees the disease very much in biblical terms, with the songs peppered with Old Testament quotations and references. The choking recitation of 'The Lord Is My Shepherd' which concludes the album is chilling, and 'Let My People Go' is an effective statement but generally the words seem comical.

The way they're delivered, however, is spectacular. Galas screams a lot but she's no Kate Bush. The lyrical excesses became irrelevant as the phrasing of the words changes beyond recognition. Galas modulates her voice for effect, transforming 'Let My People Go' into a bitter, bluesy snarl, and 'Let's Not Chant About Despair' into an unsettling rant of condemnation. The unaccompanied rendition of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' may break glass or kill sensitive animals, and the title track uses a fairground jazz tune a sardonically as Tom Waits might.

Galas' extreme interpretation of the voice-as-instrument theory has the rare distinction of being something new and untried. This album will shake the complacency out of you, if nothing else.  
MATTHEW HYLAND

## LOOSE ENDS The Real Chuckeeboo (Virgin)

Loose Ends have been at the forefront of a British soul movement that has been burgeoning for a while now, and seems to be once again undergoing a resurgence with the emergence of a number of very strong young acts that owe their success more to the creation of an elegant, indigenous dance sound that to that other great British tradition, the

ridiculous fad (Acid Jazz remix of rare groove classic anyone?). Loose Ends had a minor hit in the USA with 'Hanging On A String' from their 1986 *Zagora* album, and it is from these shores that Loose Ends take a lot of the influences for *The Real Chuckeeboo*. Philly soul, jazz and even Latino styles are plundered and reassembled with a definite 'satin sheets' feel a la Luther Vandross, to create their own sound.

Loose Ends, like most British soulsters, don't seem to find the tension their American counterparts can give a song, the tension their American counterparts can give a song, yet they have a strong element in Jayne Eugene's voice, she colours the songs beautifully, using the full extent of her range in an almost casual style, much like the current hot English soul property Mica Paris. If anything, Loose Ends could take a leaf from Ms Paris' book and let the voice really take over — as it is, Jayne Eugene seems content to just ride the music on some songs. But still, the smooth funk of tracks like 'Mr Bachelor' and 'Gratitude' felt mighty good on the hot Sunday afternoon when I listened to it, so if summer keeps on in that fashion *The Real Chuckeeboo* and others like it should see some deserved turntable action.  
KIRK GEE

## STICKY FILTH Weep Woman Weep (Ima Hitt)

Another great self-effacing name in

the best hardcore tradition. Dirty Rotten Imbeciles, The Stupids and now Sticky Filth. Anyone who's seen the grossly sexist sleeve, however, will guess rightly that the group draw more of their inspiration from the worst excesses of heavy metal than hardcore.

The album begins with the opening chord from Hunters and Collectors' 'Throw Your Arms Around Me' but that self-indulgence is soon replaced by chugging groin-thrust thrash.

Sticky Filth are actually very competent instrumentally, but any admiration you might have for the guitarist's finger acrobatics will be outweighed by amusement and/or revulsion at a track listing which has a very earnest song about AIDS following a showcase of sexual bravado and a necrophiliac's anthem.

Spinal Tap live on in New Plymouth.  
MATTHEW HYLAND

## COLIN JAMES Colin James (Virgin)

Colin James, mmm, roll that around the tongue for awhile — it doesn't quite have the ring of legend around it, and he's from Canada and he plays a very polished brand of R&B that includes a couple of Willie Dixon numbers — 'Down In The Bottom' and 'Why'd You Lie?' — among his own well-rehearsed workouts. Too smooth for comfort and maybe he should change his name to somethin' like Howlin' Colin.  
GEORGE KAY



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