

Records

PIXIES Doolittle (4AD)

"I wanna grow up to be a debaser," yowls Black Francis on the first song of the album, as if we didn't already know. Pixieness at its best is pure debasement, the sound of everything being shot to hell. If Michael Stipe and Iggy Pop stand on opposite sides of the brink of collapse, the Pixies are the brink itself, the momentary blur of the senses as the world turns upside down.

They're probably also the next candidates for worldwide critical deification and subsequent decaffeination, so if only in the interests of recognising the joyous fallibility that makes them what they are today, it's worth pointing out that there are some truly horrible moments on *Doolittle*. Most worrying are the cutesy 50s affectations of 'Here Comes Your Man' and 'La La Love You'. A lot of words have been used in connection with "Pixies" in the past but I hope this is the last time "quaint" or "Jonathan Richman" seems appropriate. Also a little disconcerting is 'Wave Of Mutilation' which starts off, as many of the songs do, sounding like a Buzzcocks or Ramones out-take but is allowed to continue unmolested in this vein for about three and a half minutes too long.

But even in these moments of genuine (as opposed to feigned) pointlessness, there's still Black Francis's gloriously wilful splatter poetry to savour. He attacks the English language in the same way guitarist Joey Santiago attacks the traditions of rock, ripping phrases out of their moral and historical context and rendering them down to purely aesthetic (non)entities. Titles like 'Gouge Away', 'I Bleed' and 'Wave Of Mutilation' play on human attraction to the ugly with a mercilessness Stanley Kubrick would be proud of.

It's not just the sideshow freaks on the lyric sheet that make the title of *Doolittle* fit to be used in the same sentence as that of its mind-reorganising predecessor *Surfer Rosa* though. If any ignorami out there are unaware of the fact, Doctor Doolittle could speak the languages of the animals, and it's the *beastliness* of their sound that will immortalise these Pixies. They can't even convince us otherwise by calling one of the songs 'Tame'. For most of the album the music



Pixies.

is clearly out of control. Each song begins mildly enough but with almost indecent haste it falls apart at the seams, ending up as the kind of mess of flailing vocals and hopelessly contorted rock-out guitar riffs we've come to expect and adore from our favourite mutants, the most unlikely wild animals in the whole flawed history of rock. **MATTHEW HYLAND**

PRINCE Batman (Warner Bros)

Let's set the facts straight, or at least permanently crooked: director Tim Burton that zany kid who did *Beetlejuice* was making *Batman* (which is not repeat *not* like the TV series) and he said, let's get Prince to do *two* songs for the movie. So Prince, being like God only shorter, did a whole album. But only *some* of the songs are in the finished *Batman* movie. So this is a soundtrack album, and it isn't. There is also a *second* soundtrack album and it is by Danny Elfman, that zany kid who did the soundtrack for *Beetlejuice*...

Prince's music was scored to go with the Joker on screen, and songs like 'Partyman' and 'Lemon Crush', written in character as they are, work fine, treading the mad funk line that ran throughout *Sign Of The Times*. 'Vicky

Waiting', a silly love song between Bruce and Ms Vale, is a standout, and could be a leftover from *Around The World In A Day*. The spirit of the "Black Album" lives on in 'Electric Chair' and 'The Future', the latter a thudding 'Bob George' style number that quotes from Buckminster Fuller (what's the last funk song you remember that makes jokes about architectural design?).

The ballad 'Scandalous' is a gem, far outstripping 'The Arms Of Orion'. The 'Batdance' single remains patchy but check out the 12-inch version, which drops the abrupt "Vicky Vale!" groove break, making it into something more conventional and satisfying.

Overall, *Batman* is light, but that's just what Prince needs after the foggy *Lovesexy* album. The drums and synths are murder, and the arrangements move with the impulsive daring that made the "Black Album" so exciting. This is Prince cutting loose — and cutting loose on one of the more enigmatic movie projects in recent years. Hope for his sake Burton doesn't screw up. **CHAD TAYLOR**

THE WARRATAHS Too Hot To Sleep (Pagan)

Indigenous country music in good ol' NZ up to this point has come across as a

plethora of hand me down affectations and spurious posturings. There's been too many shams who have equated bucolic with schmaltz, who have aped but never understood.

In the space of two records Wellington's Warratahs have gone an almighty way towards redressing the balance. These are people you can trust. The sheer assurance of the Warratahs debut came as a surprise to many people, this writer included. *Too Hot To Sleep* is a logical succession, no real departures but confirmation that the first effort was no fluke.

The emergence of Barry Saunders as a singer/songwriter of genuine stature has been a joy to behold. Throughout the album his voice resides on the brave side of stoic. Exactly the timbre needed to convey these tales of heartache. The single 'St Peter's Rendezvous' is a poignant evocation of a father-son relationship nearing the end and 'Taranaki' a snapshot that says yes, you can go home again. It would be unfair to neglect Wayne Mason's contributions; 'Ringing Of The Bell' and 'Forgot To Take My Heart' are evidence there's not one but two burgeoning talents on offer here.

There's an effortless *bon homie* on display here which can only have been honed during countless live shows. *Too Hot To Sleep* is choc a block with unpretentious, heartfelt music smouldering with a quiet inner strength that makes the Warratahs something special. **GARTH SEAR-CARTWRIGHT**

VARIOUS ARTISTS Studio 1 Collector's Edition LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY Chicken Scratch (Heartbeat)

Clement Seymour Dodd, AKA Coxson, AKA Scorch, AKA Downbeat, has written himself a unique and vital chapter in reggae history. As the first black man in Jamaica to own his own recording studio, Dodd has succeeded in creating an instantly identifiable sound which continues to set reggae standards. The crucial rhythms recorded by his musicians have been copied many times but seldom surpassed. Only a handful of reggae artists have never recorded on his Studio 1 label, which still flourishes today. A recent single for Coxson by Little John shows the master has kept up with the trends without sacrificing his label's identity. Artists who made their reputation with him include the Wailers. Burning Spear, the Gladiators, the

Wailing Souls, Freddie McGregor, Ken Boothe, Marcia Griffiths... I could fill the rest of this space.

The Coxson sound has a timeless appeal. I fondly recall seeing Anton Ellis in front of the Studio 1 band at Reggae Sunsplash in 1986, effortlessly rolling back 20 years and featuring many of the musicians who made those original recordings. Studio 1 itself puts out some very high quality reissues, often aided by the Massachusetts label Heartbeat, whence come these two albums. I think they're numbers four and five in a series which belongs in every collection.

Collector's Edition features rarities and out-takes from 1968 to 1973. Top of the class are Bob Andy and Marcia Griffiths' spirited 'Always Together' and Ken Boothe's standard 'Moving Away'. Other treasures include Burning Spear's previously unreleased 'Live Good', Larry Marshall's mento-based 'Son Son' and Dudley Sibley's 'Love In Our Nation', a prime example of Coxson production at its most subtle.

The Lee Perry collection will delight fans of the master, being a rare collection of his earliest recordings from the 60s. Like so many Coxson artists, Perry started out as a studio dogsbody, doing everything from plugging in the sound system to selling records. He worked mainly as a singer in the early days before stepping out in his own right as a composer, arranger and producer, Perry is at his sly, salacious best. The double entendres of 'Roast Dunk' and 'Puss In Bag' typified the rude rock steady beat which survived only a handful of years before being overpowered by harder riddims and more serious lyrics. Of special interest is 'Man To Man', possibly the earliest recorded encounter between Perry and the Wailers. This was to lead to a historic collaboration in later years which produced some of reggae's most enduring standards.

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DUNCAN CAMPBELL

COLD CUT What's That Noise? (CBS)

Jackson Pollock, now there's an artist. Colours on a canvas, dipping and dripping until the total vision appears. Which is a process similar to Coldcut, but instead of paint, they use beats.

But unlike Jackson Pollock, they believe in control, mathematical control. They are the sons of Kraftwerk,

the European masters of controlled emotion, and you hear echoes of the teutonic quartet on almost every track. Like 'Theme From Reportage' and the direct steal 'My Telephone'. Like Kraftwerk, they like structure, placing noise and musical notes in an almost architectural sense. Hence "House" music, which stands as solid as a real house, but at times can be just as empty. Like 'People Hold On' with its Deep House inflections; somehow it just doesn't work, it lacks any sense of realism. It's a simulation — which, we should all know by now, is all we have left in the latter part of this century.

But Coldcut are good simulators, like the rare groove sounds of 'Fat (Party and Bullshit)'. Best of all is this thing called 'Smoke 1', a brilliant attempt to re-invent ska. Like 'Last Train To Skaville' put on a rollercoaster, all snare rim shots and hazy rhythms. Using Junior Rad on 'Stop This Crazy Thing' was also inspired, a great track. Not so great, in fact terrible, is Mark E Smith doing yet another William Burroughs imitation on '(I'm) In Deep'.

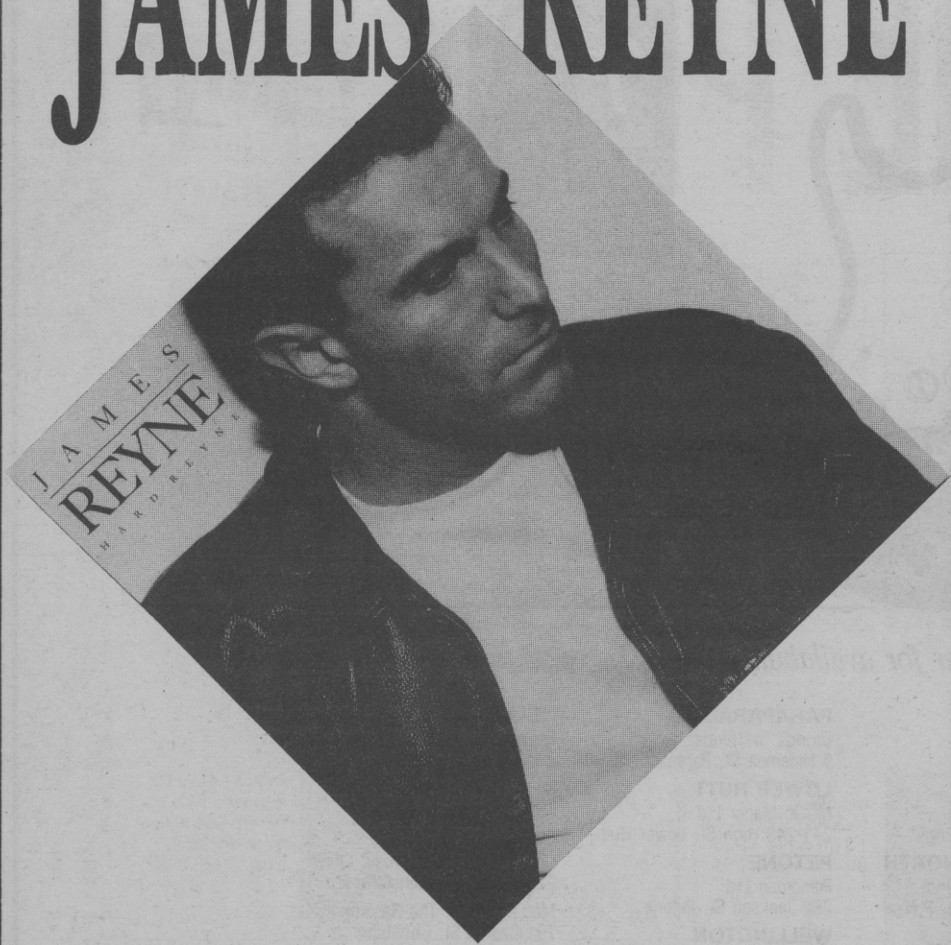
Coldcut are DJs Black and More, famous for their remix of Eric B and Rakim's 'Paid In Full' and this amazing collage of over 60 records called 'Beats And Pieces'. With this interesting album they prove that the DJ is of prime importance in modern music, no longer relegated to secondary positions in the creative process, but at the forefront of the new technology, creators of the new noise. **KERRY BUCHANAN**

BOB MOULD Workbook (Virgin)

Flick through Husker Du's back-catalogue and it's obvious that their finest songs were Mould's most anxious moments, confessions of doubt shored up by acetylene guitars. Hart provided keen competition and an alternative style but *Workbook* confirms what we all knew anyway — Mould was the architect and builder of what must rank as one of the best bands of the decade, no question.

His musical progression in Husker Du was frightening; *Land Speed Record* with its embryonic thrash hardcore hardly gave an inkling of the future brilliance that was to eventuate in *Zen Arcade* and *New Day Rising* and on patches of *Flip Your Wig*, *Candy Apple Grey* and *Warehouse*. With the band floundering over Hart's drug problems — or so the story goes — it was to be expected that Mould would throw off

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