

RECORDS

THE ROMANTICS EPIC

What first aroused my curiosity over these Yank newcomers was their single "What I Like About You" produced by Pete Solley, a man already in some demand for his excellent work with The Sports, Jo Jo Zep and Russell Morris. The Romantics forty-five with Solley at the helm, captured the sheer irrepressible freshness and energy of the Young Rascals at their peak. No mean feat.

The album tries to do the same but suffers from the strain of trying to be too fresh, too spotless for too long. It does, however, have its moments. The single leads the pack followed by two other convincing powerpop tributes to teen love, "When I Look In Your Eyes" and "Gimme One More Chance". They also join the Pretenders, the Knack and Jimmy and the Boys in worthwhile re-treads of old lesser known Kinks' songs with "She's Got Everything", the under-rated flip of "Day's".

But strip away the Romantics' borrowed gusto and you're left with a band struggling for ideas and shackled by weak to mediocre material. They also betray disturbing signs (red leather suits and Beatle boots 'chrisssake) that they are preening themselves to slip into the modern American pop idiom as typified by the Knack. That indeed would be a pity because the Romantics do have points in their favour but it's a matter of refining and developing them into something more substantial than is offered by this, their first album.

George Kay

SISTER SLEDGE LOVE SOMEBODY TODAY COTILLION

Last year's *We Are Family* from Sister Sledge — sisters Debbie, Joni, Kim and Kathie Sledge — was one of the best albums in disco and up there with the best in any field in 1979. The Chic masterminds, songwriters and producers Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards supplied probably their strongest collection of songs and in return Sister Sledge turned in sparkling performances that lifted the songs above the formula-bound slickness that seems to plague Chic albums.

Regrettably Sister Sledge's second album *Love Somebody Today* fails to maintain the standards set by *We Are Family*. The pro-

Romantics



ducers and writers are once again Edwards and Rodgers, and while they describe the album as "the most well-rounded" they've done to date, this merely means they've too often abandoned their strengths in search of variety.

There are successful advances from the earlier album: the use of jazz-inflected sax solos on "Love Somebody Today" and "Reach Your Peak". And when it comes to hitting an irresistible groove Edwards and Rodgers have definitely not lost their touch, but too few of the songs here are substantial enough to warrant the care in singing and production that is evident. That's the trouble with formulas, without care they wear thin.

Alastair Dougal

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & THE MAGIC BAND SHINY BEAST (BAT CHAIN PULLER) VIRGIN

Since his first appearance with the Magic Band in the early sixties, Captain Beefheart (christened Don Van Vliet) has established his own credo within the broad boundaries of rock'n'roll. *Trout Mask Replica* set out unorthodox standards later picked up by the likes of

Dickies



Pere Ubu. After numerous other unique albums, two of them on the Virgin label 1974, he dissolved the Magic Band and re-acquainted himself with his old mate, Frank Zappa.

Since then he has formed a new Magic Band and written new material for an album titled *Bat Chain Puller* between 1976 and '78. It's new 1980, dontcha know, and Virgin have thankfully released the aforementioned album that other record companies seemed reluctant to handle.

The songs date back, in many cases, to four years ago, but no matter, as Beefheart has a Magic Band that adroitly conveys the moods of his songs. On "Tropical Hot Dog Night" guitarists Jeff Teper and Richard Redus mesh busily below Bruce Fowler's carnival trombone. Beefheart's great talent has always been his ability to draw form and music from apparent chaos and shape it to suit his particular emotion. On "Owed T'Alex" it's frustration and the band collide with all of them ostensibly playing something different. On "Love Lies" it's sorrow, and here Bruce Fowler evokes Beefheart's lost-in-love dejection perfectly with sleazy trombone.

Shiny Beast, like most of Beefheart's albums, is an acquired taste but with a little persistence you'll find that it's almost an embarrassment of riches.

George Kay

BILLY JOEL GLASS HOUSES CBS

It would be hard to imagine a slicker product than Billy Joel's new album. Not that it is at all bad — there are some striking moments and the whole thing has a professionalism and polish that can't be denied — indeed there are times when you can see that Joel is trying to extend himself beyond the self-imposed limits of a Top 20 singer-songwriter.

The ballads are there in full force — "Don't Ask Me Why" "Through the Long Night" and "C'etait Toi" (which is undercut by some excruciating French). Often lyrically they are let down by Joel's rather pat imagery:

*Here I am again
In this smoky place
With my brandy eyes
"Yeux Ivres" in the French verse is less ostentatious and is effective.*

Two songs are of particular interest. "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me" shows Joel reacting to the phenomenon of new wave and coming up with a perhaps predictable response, but in "I Don't Want to be Alone" he is working in Costello territory, and although it doesn't have Costello's incisive bitterness and edge, it does represent some attempt to grow as a musician. And "All for Lenya" still intrigues me with its snappy little verses and a nice turn of understatement that is sorely needed in some of the other love songs (and eight out of the ten songs fall into this category).

William Dart

THE DICKIES DAWN OF THE DICKIES A&M

Every fad has its clowns and the "new wave" has the Dickies from LA, hardly the hotbed of rock'n'roll, and the Dickies are not about to change that.

Starting life in blue (or was it green? pink? horizontally striped in psychedelic?) vinyl as *The Incredible Shrinking Dickies* these five Zappa-influenced satirists have wasted no time in conjuring up another audio B-Grade movie, *Dawn of the Dickies*.

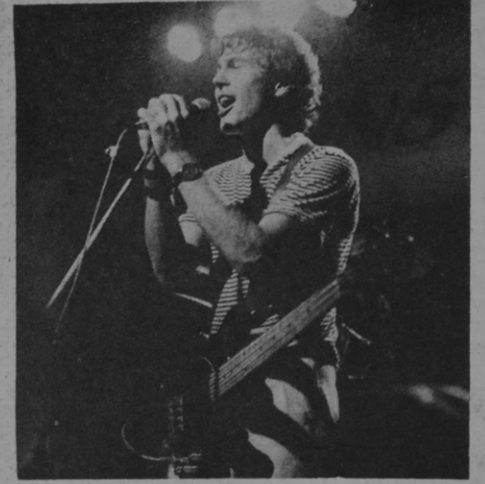
Again the Dickies are determined to prove that they are the fastest playing band on the planet as "Nights In White Satin" is subdued to their breakneck treatment. The best songs on the album, "Where Did His Eye Go" and "Fan Mail" come on like loving send-ups of the Buzzcocks in their classic pop choruses and surging directness, two qualities misdirected on the crucial "Attack of the Mole Men".

At a pinch *Dawn of the Dickies* is fun and it's always valuable to have people like the Dickies around to prevent the whole business of rock'n'roll from becoming too serious or profound, but these guys take much more than they give. And with Side Two clocking in at a mere thirteen minutes you get the feeling the joke's on us.

Who's laughing?

George Kay

Final old CB gig, Mainstreet.



CITIZEN BAND CB BOOTLEG CBS

Unlike most live albums, this one was an after thought. Citizen Band never set out on a tour with one of them mobile studios that fit in a truck. In fact, like many *real* bootlegs, this album was derived from a live-to-air radio broadcast, though the tape rolled at Mandrill Studio, not in someone's home.

CB Bootleg is a live-in-the-studio LP with four tracks that appeared on their debut *Citizen Band* and six from *Just Drove Thru Town*. There are no tunes not already on the two studio albums, and also absent is the atmosphere and audience reaction of a hot CB gig.

The selection is almost a 'best of', though missing are: stage fave "Good Morning Citizen" and *JDTT* ace "No Stereo". The performance is, of course, very competent. Greg Clark's live playing and the Chunn-Eccles rhythm section of old CB are well documented, and both ex members get by singing the covers, Clark — "I Feel Good" and Chunn — "Protection".

Many tracks are more contemporary in sound than the studio versions and surpass them, despite the comparatively thin sound. For example, "Julia" and "S.O.S." are not as wet as on *CB* and *JDTT* and stompers like "Rust In My Car" are not buried in an excess of echo and overdubs.

However, far more satisfying than *CB Bootleg* would be a live recording at one of the band's Budokans: the Island of Real or Titirangi RSA (or Auckland Town Hall). But such tapes do not exist. So here it is, the old CB line-up, as live as you'll get it.

Murray Cammick

VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO MGM NICO CHELSEA GIRL MGM

Classics both, from the days when MGM, and their Verve Forecast subsidiary, were looking at what people might like tomorrow, not yesterday. The Velvets 1966 debut with model-turned-chanteuse Nico is a stunning work. Was and is. It contains everything the band gave to rock — the pretty ("Sunday Morning", "I'll Be Your Mirror", "Femme Fatale"), the eerie ("All Tomorrow's Parties"), the magnificent ("I'm Waiting For The Man", "Heroin"), the eerie and magnificent ("Venus In Furs") and the innovative ("European Son"). The last-named was where *Metal Machine Music* began. Incomprehensible and unfashionable then, respected now.

There's more (more? this album is actually longer than the new 20-track Costello "Run Run Run" probably rating as the pick of them. And then there's "The Black Angel's Death Song", which I always presumed came from listening to too much Dylan until someone once suggested that to Reed and he summoned up his ICIEST stare before replying are you serious? It's not being stubborn, or old, to love this record a whole lot.

Nico did *Chelsea Girl* two years after the Velvets album. It's arguably a little more sought after than it should be, but still a fascinating, absorbing and often beautiful record. The backdrops are baroque most of the way, and with the cool distant vocal trademark already well defined, the seeds of the silletos-on-ice music of *The Marble Index* and *Desertshore* albums to come are clear.

The songs come from boyfriends, reputed boyfriends and, even, just friends (Jackson Browne, Dylan, Tim Hardin, Reed and Cale — you sort 'em out) (was Jackson Browne REAL-ly only 16?). Dylan's "I'll Keep It With Mine" is three-quarters as good as Sandy Denny and Fairport Convention (that good) and Hardin's "Eulogy To Lenny Bruce" is typically direct and moving.

"Chelsea Girls", with a line or two not entirely unapplicable to what happened to Nico herself in the late 1970s, and "It Was A Pleasure Then" are the chief crossover points for the Velvets' more sonic approach. The latter is pure primitivism, with guitar, amplifier, microphone and tape recorder all seemingly crushed together in one tiny gloriously-feeding-back space. I think you get those squeaky sounds by using the side of the guitar pick.

Nico was still glancing back at coffee houses and folk-rock on some of this album, but there is copious evidence too of the brave and uncompromising music to come. Its difference has made it last especially well.

Roy Colbert.

THE SELECTER

TOO MUCH PRESSURE

PLACE GREY SCAL'S HERE

todd rundgren

roger powell

kasim sulton

john wilcox

adventures in
UTOPIA

THE SELECTER

TOO MUCH PRESSURE