

**THE BEACH BOYS  
KEEPIN' THE SUMMER ALIVE  
CARIBOU**

The conventional Beach Boys theory is that Brian Wilson is 19 cents in the dollar and the extent to which the group can survive is dependent on how well they can prop him up and convince the world he is at least 84. But the overweight and frightened man who shuffled around Noahs Hotel in Christchurch clutching a cake of soap and who later gave me the saddest interview I've ever had to try and pull together needs a lot of propping up these days.

Five of the tracks on the new Beach Boys album carry Brian's name, and none of them produce more than a muted spark of his former melodic genius (rock's finest). Carl's title song is a confident rocking opener along Marcellian lines, and producer Bruce Johnston's closing piece of middle-aged Paul Simon-like perfection will probably earn a Grammy nomination, but there isn't a lot inbetween — technically and vocally awesome as this album nevertheless is. Without the melodic highs, the group's perennial leaning towards naivety and lyrical mawkishness is laid bare, and even 48 tracks and some beautiful vocal arranging can't climb over that.

Last year's excellent L.A. ("Angel Come Home" and "Baby Blue" were truly memorable) suggested the move to Caribou had brought with it a more marked creative recovery than we really should expect at this stage. But *Keepin' The Summer Alive*, warmth on the ear notwithstanding, moves one step back.

Roy Colbert

**JOHN FOX  
METAMATIC  
VIRGIN**

Talk about bad luck. John Foxx always manages to be either slightly ahead of, or behind the times. As leader/vocalist with Ultravox his bent for futurist electronic music instead of simple chord thrashing left him out of favour with the new wave. Now he has gone solo with an all-synthesiser album, but only after Human League have made futurist electronic music hip.

In 1979, Foxx left Ultravox to develop his own ideas, and he has probably mastered the techniques of the sound at least as well as the Human League. Drum machine and one synthesiser take the place of a rhythm section. Then one or two more synthesisers play as lead instruments and in this area Foxx shows a deft melodic touch. Chanted vocals complete the sound.

Best cuts are perhaps the English single "Underpass" and "No one Driving". It does sound like a jump onto the synthesiser bandwagon but Foxx just never has the right sound at the right time.

Dominic Free

**CAROLYNE MAS  
MERCURY**

At the risk of being labelled a chauvinist, I fail so far to be impressed with the current crop of new lady rockers (Chrissie Hynde and Martha Davis excepted).

While Carlyne Mas can admittedly write a good song, she fails to convince as a performer. This 24-year-old New Yorker has been tagged as a female Springsteen, an albatross around the neck for anyone, and not helped by the Bruce-type arrangements which dominate this album.

Mas is well backed by the likes of guitarist David Landau (ex Jackson Browne and Warren Zevon), Crispin Cioe on sax and Andy Newmark on drums.

On "Stillsane", "Sadie Says" and "Quote Goodbye Quote", she shows a degree of resourcefulness and punch. Her torch ballads, "Call Me" and "Baby Please" are strong and emotional, but she sounds too polite and well-mannered.

In other hands, her songs could gain some more life. As a singer, Carlyne Mas lacks grit.

Duncan Campbell

**IN BRIEF**

Reviews by Ken Williams, George Kay and Alastair Dougal.

**Rodney Crowell, But What Will the Neighbours Think (Warner Bros)**

On its own level *But What Will the Neighbours Think* is no bad album, but when stacked up against Crowell's debut of last year *Aint' Living Long Like This*, it's a sad disappointment. It displays little of the verve, playfulness and feeling that gave many cause to think Crowell could single handedly resurrect the soul of country-rock. Here he delivers the songs and the musicianship is impeccable as before but the production by Crowell and Craig Leon keeps the whole project lifeless and makes Crowell sound like the mediocre vocalist he really isn't. Don't count Crowell out yet, but those interested would do better to go back to Crowell's underexposed debut for the real goods. AD

**The Headboys, The Shape of Things to Come (RSO)**

The Headboys are so competent and well-rounded musically that they're bound to be ignored.

From Scotland, this new four-piece demonstrate that they have the rare knack of writing succinct, orthodox, intelligent rock songs. "Schoolgirls", lewd and sassy, and "My Favourite DJ" are snappy examples of singles' flippancy and "Gonna Do It Like This" makes in-roads into territory that Supertramp should have had the sense to explore.

**Cliff Richard, Rock On With Cliff (EMI)**

Cliff Richard always aimed to be the British Elvis and while he never reached the peaks of his idol, this set of Cliff's early rockers still makes a strong collection. His style may have been light, but crisp backing, good production and a strong collection of songs add up to a surprisingly successful compilation. AD

**Various, Metal For Muthas, (EMI)**

This is a compilation album of new and yet-to-be-abused contenders in British heavy metal.

With new-found respectability stemming partly from understanding critics' reviews, the unbleeding legions on this album front up with verve and humour, the latter quality sadly lacking in their American counterparts.

Iron Maiden, Samson and Praying Mantis are the best of the bunch each one acutely aware of their part in heavy metal's one dimensional plan to take over the world.

Deliberate brainlessness, there are intellectuals at work here ... somewhere. GK

**Dirk Hamilton, Thug of Love (Elektra)**

He sings kinda like Van Morrison, writes songs like no-one I can think of and has now delivered his second album of melodically subtle and lyrically eccentric songs. While no revolutionary talent, Dirk Hamilton is one of the few singer-songwriters from the US West Coast now delivering much of interest. Worth investigating. AD

**KC & the Sunshine Band, Greatest Hits (Epic)**

The title says it all, 12 songs (1973-80) from the Miami dance masters. KC's invitation to the dance is infectious and insistent, free of electronic bombast. His best stuff floats on a wave of bubbling rhythm guitars and lightly rifting horns. Unashamedly music for the spine, not the mind. In the midst of the good-timing, the recent biggie "Please Don't Go" seems unpalatably melodramatic. KW

**Ian Matthews, Siamese Friends (Roxburgh Records)**

A dedicated artist who has already chalked up three of the seventies' minor works of art, *Later That Same Year* (with Southern Comfort), *If You Saw Thro' My Eyes* and *Valley Hi* produced back in '73 by Michael Nesmith.

*Siamese Friends* is his best since those rosy days highlighting some of his own songs, "Heatwave", "Hearts On the Line" and "You Don't See Me" along with contributions from Stevie Nicks (sappy cliched "Crying in the Night"), John Martyn (run-of-the-mill ballad "Anna") and Jules Shear (a nugget "Home Somewhere").

Eut it's Matthews' album and it's proof positive that he's in fine fettle. For tasteful rock, begin here. GK

**Smokey Robinson, Where There's Smoke (Motown)**

His years behind a Motown corporation desk haven't dimmed Robinson's powers. This album can stand with his best sixties work. Smokey is one of the great modern songwriters

**Rodney Crowell**



Headboys



Richard Lloyd

and the heartbreaking fragility of his voice has seldom been put to better use than on "Cruisin'", a quite irresistible, late-night love song. Smokey Robinson's "Shop Around" put Motown on the map 20 years ago. It is a tribute to the man that his music of today sounds just as fresh. KW

**The Starjets, God Bless the Starjets (Epic)**

The Starjets, from Belfast, look like four war-ravaged punks and as such you'd be forgiven for expecting vitriolic tunes in the Stiff Little Fingers' vein. But pop harmonies, second generation Cheap Trick style, and a production more suited to the Captain and Tenille, soften the potential impact that these guys occasionally ("War Stories") hint at.

Advice: fire the producer, drop the harmonies and turn those guitar amps up. Then we're in business. GK

**Sky (Ariola)**

The publicity calls this "a pot pourri of rock, jazz, folkish airs and a smattering of the classics." A fair description, and not unexpected when the five members of Sky include classical guitar virtuoso John Williams and other well-grounded musical tradesmen who like to mix their modes.

While there is no shade of doubt about the proficiency of the players, the music only narrowly avoids an "easy listening" tag. Sky is a group of mutual admirers. I'm sure they enjoyed the experience. I was bored. KW

**Heart, Bebe Le Strange (Epic)**

With Heart, it is even more difficult to separate the music from the groomed photogenic entity. Their albums have contained the odd brash highlight ("Crazy On You", "Magic Man" and "Barracuda") but without the vogue-ish Wilson sisters up-front it's possible that they might still be playing pubs in the Cannuck backwoods.

*Bebe Le Strange* is probably their most consistent combination of rock and romance, but all too often the band confuse energy with potency. Max Factor agro, pass the blow drier please. GK

**Mickey Jupp, Long Distance Romancer (Chrysalis)**

This is a disappointment after Jupp's *Japanese* album of last year. Where that was enjoyable in its buoyant New Orleans-style rock and roll, Jupp here seems a victim of his producers, Lol Creme and Kevin Godley, formerly one half of 10cc. They consistently undercut potential rockers with unnecessarily fussy production. Still, Jupp is one of the most in-

teresting "traditional" rock writers and his reworkings of fifties forms will provide others with profitable material ("You Made a Fool Out of Me" and "Switchboard Susan" have already been recorded — better — by Jo Jo Zep and Nick Lowe respectively). KW

**The Shirts, Street Light Shine (Harvest)**

The definite article before their name and a timely appearance in the New York scene are all the Shirts have to offer in the way of on-the-spot-music.

Mellow than their first album, which wasn't exactly a blitz, vocalist Annie Golden sounds like she's been listening to Debbie Harry as she guides her anonymous band through easily digestible pop, "Laugh and Walk Away" and "Can't Cry Anymore" being the best examples.

If you would cross the road for Blondie and the Tourists then this album wouldn't be too far from heaven-on-earth. GK

**Michael Franks, One Bad Habit (Warner Bros)**

Michael Franks' fifth album confirms him as a great miniaturist. His whimsical love songs and his wistful vocal style may not be for everyone, but personally I like him very much. The delightful jazz arrangements are the frosting on a light but tasty cake. If you are intrigued by an idea like "love is just like baseball" lend an ear. KW

**Richard Lloyd, Alchemy (Elektra)**

In Television Lloyd was always overshadowed by Verlaine's idiosyncratic guitar and songwriting skills, and *Alchemy*, although revealing Lloyd as a talented writer in the Steve Miller mould, lacks the unique touches to Verlaine's solo album.

*Alchemy* doesn't produce gold but it is a strong, consistent album of thoughtful tapered rock songs, "Should Have Known Better", "Misty Eyes" and "Blue and Grey" in particular. Well worth the effort. GK

**Jules and the Polar Bears, Fenetics (CBS)**

Jules Shear has already been tipped as one of LA's brightest young men. With Jackson Browne vocal influences, he nevertheless manages to overcome this handicap by being able to build fine melodies into his gutsy song structures.

*Fenetics* is a good album, another secure step in Shear's development as a notable song writer. "The Smell of Home" is kinky reggae, "Real Enough To Love" is seven minutes of high grade balladeering and as far as rock goes, you get the pick of the rest. Shouldn't be ignored. GK

**Linda Ronstadt, Mad Love (Asylum)**

Well, yes it's a formula but like most formulas it has its share of successes. Here it's the remakes of the Hollies' "I Can't Let Go" and one other 60's goodie "Hurt So Bad". While the three Elvis Costello songs here are not as bad as one might expect, too much of this is merely perfunctory. In the end *Mad Love* lacks passion. AD

**Focus, Focus on Focus (EMI)**

It's hard to believe that earlier last decade Focus and their brand of crass rock muzak were touted as something exciting, breaking the barriers of rock etc.

Now, little if any of their music has survived the inspiration of the last few years. "House of the King" and "Sylvia" are still ideal TV themes but "Hocus Pocus", once a show-stopper, now sounds gimmicky and fatuous.

Hocus pocus? No just plain hokum. GK

**The Rose (Atlantic)**

Whatever the merits of the film, *The Rose*, I find this soundtrack album unlistenable. Bette Midler, who surely is nobody's idea of a rock singer, seems constantly on the verge of hysteria, the music is a hodgepodge of blues-rock cliches and the monologues recall the more squirmy aspects of Janis Joplin. What she does to "When a Man Loves a Woman" is too much to bear. KW

**Various, Platinum Plus (CBS)**

TV promoted compilation albums have shown how you sell records to people who don't buy records. K-Tel and the Solid Gold series must be the most common household musical artefacts and they fit snugly beside the Des O'Connor and the Andy Williams greatest hits without being too out of place.

*Platinum Plus* is a little different. It doesn't contain platinum as such, (possible exception Michael Jackson) but it does boast some of the best forty-fives of last year. XTC, The Specials, Ry-Cooder, Cheap Trick and the rest, all produced ace singles and their best are herein showcased.

Still, there's no substitute for the singles themselves. GK

**WANTED, A CREATIVE PERSON  
INTERESTED IN PUBLISHING  
& MUSIC  
& FULL OR PART TIME EMPLOYMENT  
WRITE TO PO BOX 5689, AUCKLAND 1  
GRAPHICS OR  
WRITING EXPERIENCE ESSENTIAL**

**Don't Miss!**

**Mental As Anything**

11 GREAT SONGS ATTENTION: UNITED STATES, MEXICO & CANADA RECORDED MAY 1979

**THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS**

JIMMY VAUGHAN KIM WILSON  
Mike Buck KEITH FERGUSON  
'GIRLS GO WILD'

mental as anything get wet

LIVE WIRE

**The Fabulous Thunderbirds**

**Live Wire**