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RECORDS

they probably surpass anything you've read about them.

Along with Denis Bovell, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare are probably the most influential producers in reggae. They take sounds and rhythms and twist them to produce something devastatingly original. Nowhere is this better illustrated than with Black Uhuru who have the songs and the voices to enable Dunbar and Shakespeare to work without restraints. The only track here not produced by them, 'Shine Eye Girl', is no less adventurous with its masterful dub.

Most compilations are fairly scrappy. This is an exception — an album so compelling that it goes beyond the superlatives it has already received.

Simon Grigg

Pearl Harbour Don't Follow Me I'm Lost Too WEA

Something of a turnaround this. Last year's *Pearl Harbour* & *The Explosions* was a pleasant surprise, very danceable, bass bubbly and unique enough to last. But the *Explosions* quickly exploded and now it's just Pearl, confronting us this time with thirteen exercises in rock'n'roll pop. Many of them sound as though they could have actually come from the vaults of 1956-62, but Pearl wrote the majority of them, confirming she's in and right behind this new stylistic move boots and all.

A muddy production, often burying the band's more inspired moments, doesn't help this enjoyable but too often unspectacular time tunnel romp. One feels there really are better vehicles for Ms Harbour's distinctive talents.

Highlights would be a Chiffons-like 'Everybody's Boring But My Baby', the humorous (Coasters even) 'At The Dentist', a pumping piano-sweetened 'Cowboys And Indians' (suggesting a duet with Dave Edmunds might just work) and 'Heaven Is Gonna Be Empty'.

Nice throwback cover too.

Roy Colbert

Stiff Little Fingers

Hanx Chrysalis

More than any band currently carrying banners Belfast's Stiff Little Fingers have a right to be angry. Their music over their two studio albums, *Inflammable Material* and *Nobody's Heroes* has always been a splash of sulphuric acid, concentrated, in its harsh and jagged portrayal of Irish conditions. But this anger has become, even in the space of only two albums, a restriction on their music.

Hanx is a muted, sometimes faster-than-the-studio live testament of their almost mythical, in some quarters, anthems from both albums. From *Inflammable Material* we are dealt blows from key cuts 'Suspect Device' 'Barbed Wire Love', an even longer version of Marley's 'Johnny Was' and their finest three minutes, 'Alternative Ulster', a distillation of their usefulness.

The slightly more sedate *Nobody's Heroes* is amply represented by the title track, a clipped and less-than-soaring version of 'Gotta Get-away', the rest of the first side and 'Tin Soldiers' from the second. Be thankful that

their version of the Specials' 'Doesn't Make It All Right' has been left in the Manor Mobile's tape decks, we don't need another.

As a track selection, predictably enough, *Hanx* is a veritable live greatest hits and unless I'm mistaken it's going to sell a bundle. Fine, it has more power and stridency than most, but it shows that the band's over-the-top 1-D song format has worn way too thin. Buy *Inflammable Material* and leave it at that.

George Kay

Various Artists

Machines

Virgin

A 12-track sampler for all those into meca-nik dancing. Melodically the machines are sometimes left to do too much of the work, but compositionally all is not lost as there are plenty of interesting lyrical ideas thrown around — from Crash Course In Science's run-down on 'Kitchen Motors', sung in a suitably atonal housewifely whine, to Fad Gadget's garish tale of 'Ricky's Hand'.

Side One, with Orchestral Manoeuvres' 'Messages' as the apex, scores stronger on continuity, Side Two springing the surprises — the sprawling anarchy of Public Image's 'Pied Piper', the similarity non-album XTC contribution 'The Somnambulist' (moody, heartbeat-based and excellent) and Irmin Schmidt/Bruno Spoerri's aural painting of a nightmare train ride 'Rapido De noir'.

A generally serious collection, Henry Badowski and Silicon Teens proving the exceptions — and the most likely singles successes.

Roy Colbert

Various Artists

Leiber & Stoller — Only In America

WEA

Rock and roll history can make dull listening. It can even be saddening. To find out a song you lived by in your high school years is as junky as 'The Tide Is High' can be shattering. So the delight of this double album set of songs written and, for the most part produced, by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller is that very little sounds rubbishy.

If you've never heard of Leiber and Stoller they could briefly be described as two middle class white guys who loved black music, wrote a series of classic rock and roll songs ('Hound Dog', 'Kansas City', 'Poison Ivy', 'Little Egypt' etc) and, perhaps just as importantly, regarded the production of a record as being as important as writing the original song.

There are 30 tracks on *Only In America*. By and large the selection is excellent. There are obscure delights like Big Mama Thornton's original 1953 version of 'Hound Dog' and the Coasters' recording of 'D.W. Washburn' which makes good sense of a good song the Monkees ruined.

I can think of only two quibbles in the song choice. Trini Lopez singing 'Kansas City' seems odd when the hit version was by Wilbert Harrison, and people like Wilson Pickett have covered it. And it would have been interesting to hear Peggy Lee's original recording of 'I'm A Woman' rather than Maria Muldaur's version, as good as it is.

But enough of the nit picking. This a collection to be enjoyed, not dissected. It's flashy, funny and fast and if La Vern Baker singing 'Saved' doesn't move you then you've never loved rock and roll.

Phil Gifford

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