

# RECORDS

## Blam Blam Blam Luxury Length Propeller

As the first blast in earnest of the independent label assault on the album market, *Luxury Length* has rather too many hopes and expectations for comfort riding on it. Not too many should be disappointed, as Blams have produced a strong and confident, if not entirely consistent, album.

With the exception of added 'zagniphonics' on 'Call For Help', the recorded versions of the songs are all pretty much as performed live over recent months, with surprisingly little embellishment beyond layering of guitars and voices. The result is an album with a unified sound and feel, uncluttered with identifiable borrowings or obviously-displayed influences. I can think of no other NZ recordings for which the two can be said. Credit is also due to Paul Streekstra and the band, for the record's full, strong sound.

All three phases of Blams song-writing are represented; the slightly awkward 'social commentary' harking back to 'Whizz Kids', shading into the 'by-Christ-we'll-make-them-dance-if-it-kills-us' freneticism which peaked with the 'No Depression' single, in turn spilling over into the more relaxed and self-assured style which emerged with 'Marsha'.

It is the songs of the more recent species which provide most of the high points, notably 'Marsha' and 'Call For Help', although 'Last Post', with an expressive Mark Bell vocal performance, 'Learning' and 'Time Enough' are not far behind. In fact it is only with a couple of the more aged pieces, 'The Businessmen' and the title track, that interest flags. Lyrics as detached and satirical as these tend to lose their impact quickly, as repeated listening erodes their novelty.

Quibbles aside, *Luxury Length* sees Blams make the step up to the full album scale of production with apparent ease. 'Call For Help' should continue their run of successful singles, although not quite matching 'Marsha'.

Don MacKay

## The Clash Combat Rock CBS

The Clash are all about expectations. Ever since their first album, both a milestone and a millstone, each step away from the narrow edicts of punk has seemed, for many, like a betrayal of alternative truths. Is there life after punk?

*Sandnista* was a creaking edifice of styles and self-indulgence but it had its touches if your mind remained open enough to assimilate them. And now the long-awaited *Combat Rock*. Is it the final sell-out, the last word in rebel-boy army posturing or a return to garageland?

None of the above. Try a different tack and you'll survive the initial disappointment of the lack of direct aggression and appreciate the precise and perceptive manipulation of black ways. The songs at first stop-start unsatisfyingly but then authentically as the band unravels its 1982 manifesto of anger against back-alley, corporation, and political expediency and corruption.

Typical Clash fare is hardly present in the musical sense but what these days is typically Clash? There's 'Should I Stay Or Should I Go?' which is 'Train In Vain' is the Beatles, the Clash doing the sixties thing. Spot the riff. There's 'Inoculated City' and 'Car Jamming', two songs of restrained finesse that recall earlier efforts. But elsewhere new ideas are in evidence.

'Rock the Casbah' is wiry, tuneful disco and 'Straight To Hell' and 'Sean Flynn' use percussion techniques for reflective effect. 'Overpowered By Funk' is a fitting dig and the dual vocal of 'Ghetto Defiant' adds to that songs bitter impact.

So there's depth, variety and imagination on *Combat Rock* that transcends the criticisms of cheap chic sloganeering that have been levelled at the band in the last two years.

Still a force to be counted.  
George Kay

## Screaming Meemees If This Is Paradise I'll Take The Bag Propeller

It is nearly two years since the rumble started about the band-

## Blams B.E.F.



over-the-bridge. Church halls began to shake to 'Louie Louie', 'Wild Thing', 'All Dressed Up' etc. The band was very together, all four on one tiny stage. (If you weren't there and want to know what it was like, play 'Pointy Ears' on *Goats Milk* at 45 rpm.)

From stage to vinyl is no easy step. From 'Can't Take It' to 'Sunday Boys', their singles have not reflected the live Meemees' pace, their brash confidence or their wall of noise. With the possible exception of 'At At', the recordings have sounded thin and tentative.

What's happened? *If This Is Paradise* has very little in common with last year's singles. Producer Ian Morris and engineer Steve Kennedy have achieved the elusive Meemees sound. With a fat, up front bass and a better drum sound, even 'Sunday Boys' sounds brand new.

Your Accent opens Side One. From the opening lines, Peter van der Fluit's bass rules and his piano adds substance, as it does on 'Fear'. The dancing starts from 'Days of Heaven' and all is let loose on 24 track delight (the best track). 'Day Goes By' - all sorts of percussion and effects over a neat bass line. But it doesn't last long enough - 12 inch version needed. The pace doesn't slow with 'Hardly Moved By You' (Yoh has boom boom drum sound) or 'What Do Eyes See' (rare minimal Michael O'Neill guitar). Then 'Sunday Boys'.

Side Two kicks off with Tony Drumm and Gurlz' Kim Willoughby on 'F is for Fear', the new single - great funky filler in the middle. Two more fast toons follow, poppy 'Coloured Days' and the instrumental 'Orson Welles'. The mood changes as the lads delve into art history with 'Dali's Moustache' (latin riddum about nothing, I think) and finally the six minute moderne

epic 'Miro Miro' (about mirrors in Dutch interiors?).

Well, Meemees have come to terms with a studio and the studio have ably come to terms with a young band. Pity old garageland faves ('Till I Die', 'Pointy Ears' etc) have been left behind, recorded only to demo standard, but still a fine debut for the Meemees. Let's hope the wait is not too long before the band extends further the ideas realised here.

Murray Cammick

## B.E.F. Music Of Quality & Distinction Vol. 1 Virgin

B.E.F. are, for the uninitiated, British Electric Foundation, alias Martin Ware and Ian Craig Marsh, alias two thirds of Heaven 17. The idea of *Music of Quality and Distinction* was to record songs the boys admired by artists that would normally not have recorded them. On paper, a great concept.

David Bowie wasn't available for the Temptations' 'Ball Of Confusion', so the job went to Tina Turner. A wise decision. The combination of Turner and Beggar & Co is superb. Their blistering horns, a great guitar intro by John McGeoch, and a gut-driven vocal from Ms Turner is the album's highlight. Bowie does, however, lend 'Secret Life of Arabia' to Associate Billy McKenzie. A fine funky feast of synthesisers, guitars and nerve-edge singing, almost bettering the original.

As for the rest? Well, Bernie Nolan destroys 'You Keep Me Hanging On', as does Gary Glitter with 'Suspicious Minds'. Paula Yates, backed by the Nancy Boys, does a toytown 'These Boots Are Made For Walking', and Glen Gregory wimps through copy-book arrangements of Lou's 'Perfect Day' and Glen Campbell's

'Wichita Lineman'. It's up to Sandie Shaw with the epic 'Anyone Who Had A Heart' to provide the record's only further bright spot.

To make an album like *Music Of Quality & Distinction*, you need quality performers and distinct material. B.E.F. sometimes fail in their pairing of the two and in their choice or treatment of songs. Back to the boardroom, boys.

Mark Phillips

## The Jam The Gift Polydor

The standard intro of the Jam's achievements shouldn't be needed here, suffice to say that their last album of nigh on eighteen months ago, *Sound Affects*, hasn't worn well and the interim trilogy of singles, revealed Weller as a trifle confused as to where the band's future lay.

*The Gift* doesn't solve his problems, it merely clarifies them. With a desire to re-create close to their live sound on record the Jam have assembled an album that is a diverse and often incongruous blend of Weller's working class vision and updated soul influences. The messy Trans-Global Express' and the calypso flavoured 'The Planner's Dream Goes Wrong' are clumsy pieces with little grace at all musically or lyrically, weaknesses the Tamla pinched 'A Town Like Malice' and the sleek 'Precious' manage to avoid, albeit only just.

The album's best songs rest firstly with Weller's aptitude for post-punk melodic simplicity, namely 'Happy Together' and 'Running on the Spot', and secondly, with his ability at eliciting melancholy bereft of sappy sentiment as in 'Ghosts' and 'Carnation'.

But as with *Sound Affects*, these highs are not high or frequent

enough as Weller's incisiveness is blunted by a desire to transparently progress and keep abreast of the times. *The Gift*, at the moment, may sound like a notch above its predecessor and it may edge out many competitors, but it's still a far cry from the determined and clear-sighted sharpness of the Jam's best work.

George Kay

## Siouxsie and the Banshees Once Upon a Time Polydor

*Once Upon a Time* is subtitled *The Singles* and is basically just that, a 10 track collection featuring the A-sides of most of the singles from 1977's 'Hong Kong Garden' through to last year's 'Arabian Knights' and with one or two reservations is a satisfactory summary of Siouxsie Sioux's greatest hits (and non hits). The only non single track is *The Scream's* 'Mirage', a rather strange choice but, I assume, a band fave.

The major drawback is the playing time of just over half an hour which, I'm afraid, really irks me, especially on a compilation where it costs little more to add a couple of tracks.

The ideal compilation is the style adopted for the Buzzcock's *Singles Going Steady* album with singles A-sides on Side One and B-sides on the other. In this case that would have made up a couple of the glaring omissions on this album, the 1979 single 'Mittageisen' (the B-side 'Love in a Void' is here) and the flip of 'The Staircase (Mystery)', a great cover of Bolan's '20th Century Boy'.

That said, the quality is all here (with perhaps the exception of the droning 'Love in a Void', an early demo) and if you don't already have the singles, this is probably the way to get them.

Simon Grigg

# SIOUXSIE AND THE BANSHEES



## ONCE UPON A TIME / THE SINGLES

I admit unashamedly to being pierced by Siouxsie and the Banshees imaginative conviction. They alone are at the beginning of some brand new restoration period. Paul Morley, November 1981

THE LONG AWAITED SINGLES ALBUM

MIRAGE PLAYGROUND TWIST ISRAEL  
LOVE IN A VOID ARABIAN KNIGHTS HONG KONG GARDEN  
HAPPY HOUSE SPELLBOUND CHRISTINE  
THE STAIRCASE (MYSTERY) polyGram

# THE WHO

Join Together

RARITIES

## RARITIES

ALL TRACKS PREVIOUSLY NOT AVAILABLE ON ALBUM!

Join Together The Relay  
I Don't Even Wasp Man  
Know Myself Here For More  
Heaven & Hell Water  
When I Was A Boy Baby Don't Do It  
Let's See Action

'JOIN TOGETHER' WITH THE WHO, NOW!

polyGram