

# Records

**Annabel Lamb**  
Once Bitten  
A&M

Suddenly from out of nowhere (well, South London actually) comes a debut that is astonishing in its confidence, maturity and diversity. The music of singer/songwriter Annabel Lamb is an eclectic brand of strong pop melody structured with the feeling and instrumentation of jazz and reggae. The enormously catchy title track, for instance, incorporates a swinging syncopation in the chorus and a soaring trumpet solo that would grace any good bebop combo. Similarly 'Backwards Through The Looking Glass' swings with a jazzy beat and features another fine trumpet outing, this time joined by Lamb's piano. On other tracks the harmonic resonances of fretless bass maintain a jazz presence.

On the other hand, numbers such as 'Red For Danger' and 'Missing' have a hi-tech reggae feel easily rivalling that of the much vaunted Shakespear-Dunbar axis.

Then there is Lamb's lyric writing. Most of her songs involve a woman's reflections on encounters (usually lost) in romantic love. Yet although there is often weariness, sometimes even melancholy, pervading her songs, it never sinks to the level of tedious ennui or self-pity because her observations remain sharp. They are also varied: from the witty, compassionate title song

about how the nice girls always lose, to the dark portrait of male sexual violence in 'No Cure'.

The lyrics are further enhanced by Lamb's vocal deliveries. While her voice retains an appealing huskiness throughout, it also spans the cracked wastes of a Nico (on 'Take Me In Your Arms') to the insouciant drawl of Chrissie Hynde (on the rocking 'Heartland') to the ironic distance of Grace Jones (who would just love to have recorded 'Missing'). Lamb even adopts an ingenuous coyness when singing the abovementioned 'No Cure' which renders the lyric even more chilling.

All this diversity may sound a little too much, as if maybe, overall, the album doesn't quite hold together. Rest assured it does. 'Take Me In Your Arms' and 'Hold Fast' come closest to buckling under the burden of their eclecticism but eventually they too make it through on their melodic hooks. No, what you get is 10 good tracks, no failures and no filler. **Peter Thomson**

**The Angels**  
Watch the Red  
CBS

On their last album, *Night Attack*, the Angels seemed to have run out of ideas. It was a collection of bland rockers, poor imitations of their earlier work. With *Watch the Red* the gauntlet is thrown at the listener as the band steams into rocker after rocker, seemingly hellbent on each song outdoing the other in the power stakes. This album would be hard to beat if urgency was the only measurement.

Apart from 'Easy Prey', which features a gravelly vocal in the Tom Waits tradition, and the ponderous blues ballad 'Stay Away', the pace of the numbers is relentless. Neeson and Brewster screen the vocals in vintage Angels style and 'Live, Lady Live', 'No Sleep in Hell' and the title track compare favourably with their past classics. An interesting interlude is the instrumental 'Bow Wow', which boils away, preparing the listener for the next assault. Only on 'The Zoo/Name Dropping' does rock give way to chaos.

Unquestionably, *Watch the Red* ushers in a return to form for Australia's heavyweight kings of power rock. No new ground is broken but the band is back on the



**The Angels**

rails with an album of songs that have the raw power of their old gems. The message is unambiguous — 'Let it rock.' **David Perkins**

**Randy Newman**  
Retrospect  
Warner Bros

Good judgement rules out calling this a "greatest hits" collection. This excellently programmed culling from seven albums collects some of the finest music of the late 20th century.

That Newman songs from 1974 and 1969 can sit comfortably back to back is testament to the strength of the man's sardonic vision. And to his — dare one say — genius.

To argue with the song selection (and I'm not) is mere quibbling. To those willing to hear more than 'Short People' (has that become a millstone?), this is the album to start with. Titles such as 'Political Science', 'Marie', 'Rider in the Rain', 'Guilty' and 'Davy the Fat Boy' should stir memories and imagination in committed Newman fans.

This part of the world may not see Randy Newman again. The disappointment of his cancelled concerts must have been a blow to a performer who seemed to be emerging from the cult shadows. It was a rare privilege to see Newman in Melbourne. It was a remarkably fine experience. **Ken Williams**

**Mark Knopfler**  
Local Hero Soundtrack  
Vertigo

This film soundtrack demonstrates Knopfler's versatility as a songwriter. The music covers a wide spectrum, encompassing traditional jigs, stark synthesiser pieces, cool jazz and pure pop. Dire Straits' fans are unlikely to be impressed by this perplexing mish-mash — the only hint of Straits is at the start of 'Smooching'.

The highlights are memorable contributions from Knopfler on solo guitar and Mike Brecker on saxophone. 'Wild Theme' is a magnificent piece of mood guitar. 'Smooching' switches adroitly from simmering guitar to cool sax and 'The Way It Starts' (featuring Gerry Rafferty on vocal) has Top 20 potential. The closing theme 'Going Home' is classic soundtrack material of epic proportions.

A difficult album to evaluate in that it bears no relationship to Knopfler's previous output, but worth checking out. **David Perkins**

**Various Artists**  
Fast Sides Always Get Played  
At Parties  
Capture

It really is about time a confident initiative like this came from outside the four main centres. This album, recorded at Capture's own studio, showcases Gisborne musicians.

The only act familiar to those

outside the region is Marching Orders. Their contribution here, 'There You Were' is pleasant, but a little disappointing, lacking the interesting work with rhythms that is the band's strong point. Vocalist Jackie Clarke sounds a little wobbly — her voice and the music don't quite blend yet but I'm picking she'll improve.

Elsewhere, Myles McKenzie writes a couple of songs the Rolling Stones never got around to writing (or maybe rewrites a couple they did write) but for all that is quite engaging. Ruinz start off with good basic ideas in 'Charlotte' and 'Excuse Me!' but can't quite carry them through. Ta Rutherford's 'Semi Mojo' has a good chorus but doesn't make it as a whole and Pete Stewart's 'Double Talk' is catchy but begins to grate after repeated listening. Of Mike Bradley's efforts, 'Sweet Serenade' and 'Fade Away' (with Andrew Kirk) are fairly inane but 'Dreaming' is better. The prime mover behind the project, producer-engineer Paul Turney, would have done better to have not ventured out of the control room — his 'The Lake' is pretty pompous. It will be interesting, however, to watch his progress in the Body Electric, where he will be relieved of the duty of singing.

The production is excellent for an eight-track recording. The only real fault is a nasty, artificial guitar sound that crops up on a number of the tracks.

But, overall, it has to be said that this record is a disappointment. Some of these songs are pleasant, but none have any real vitality or originality. Perhaps the problem is due in part to the fact that the album seems mainly to feature the city's established musicians. Capture would do well to look a little further afield, out of the mainstream. In a garage, somewhere in Gisborne ... **Russell Brown**

**Bananarama**  
Deep Sea Skiving  
RTC

So you accidentally dripped setting gel on your copy of 'Shy Boy'? Well the album's finally here and you can buy that gem and the other two hit singles. The knotty problem is the other songs are only slightly more interesting than the sound of a hairdryer.

Bananarama started off sweet-

ening up Fun Boy 3 then stepped out to comb their own gloss into the new blow wave of shimmering pop. They had a curly moment in New York when they tried to mime a supposed live gig. But in true style they've bounced back into Top Tens world-wide with 'Really Saying Something' and a remake of the old Steam hit 'Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye'. Both feature on this album.

Which leaves the remaining loose ends. With the ultra-sheen of 'Shy Boy' leading the field in sparkling pop last year, I expected this album to positively dazzle its way through the speakers. Instead we get lank arrangements, limp playing and a liberal sprinkling of production lacquer in the hope we won't notice. The one Paul Weller song, 'Doctor Love' fails to shine above the rest and the songs credited to Bananarama themselves ... well let's not split hairs ... are just dron. Pass me the gel. **Mark Everton**

**Marillion**  
Script for A Jester's Tear  
EMI

Just when you thought "Progressive" bands had gone the way of the dinosaurs, up pop Marillion.

I suppose with the second waves of metal and punk in full swing it was inevitable that somebody would rejuvenate that peculiarly British arm of the rock family-tree that saw ELP, Pink Floyd, Curved Air, Yes et al ruling the roost in the early seventies (not to mention, of course, Gabriel era Genesis, from whence Marillion take their main inspiration).

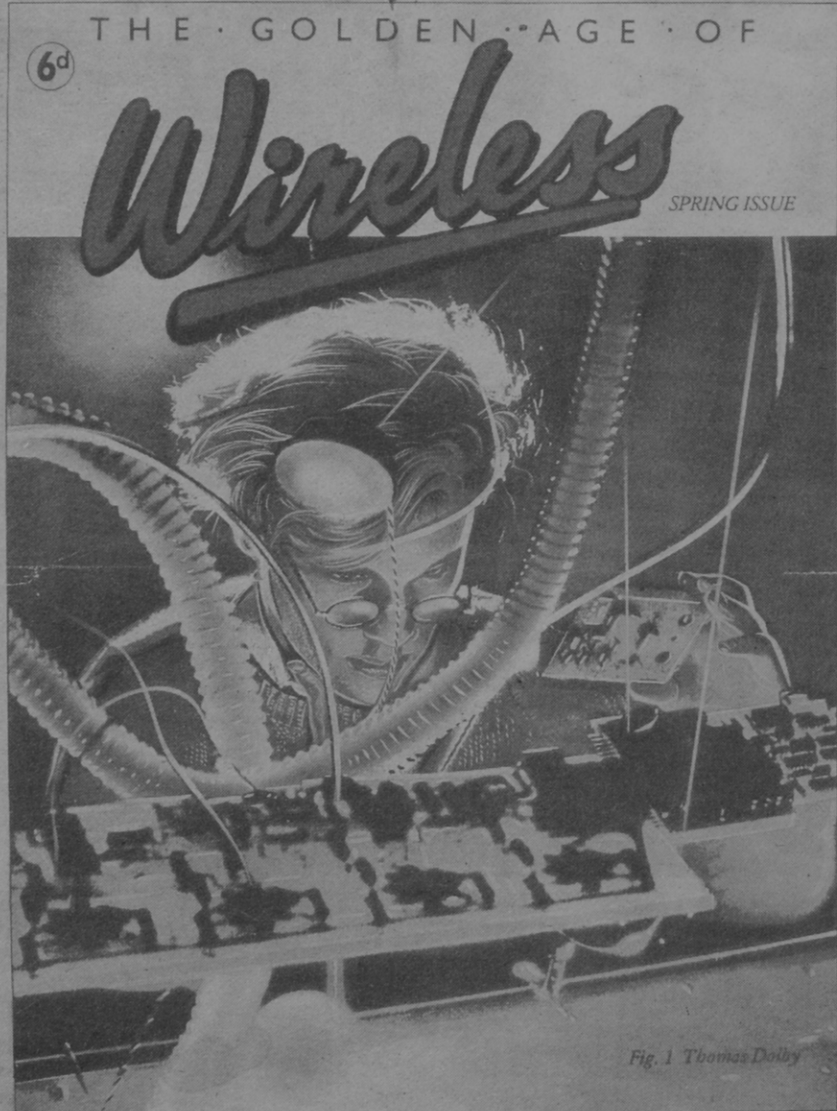
*Script for a Jester's Tear* evokes memories of *Fragile*, *Foxtrot* and *Trilogy* though Marillion are distinctive in their own right and have created an accomplished, thoroughly enjoyable debut.

As with their forebears, Marillion abandon traditional song structures and the six long songs here develop and grow with numerous time changes and mixtures of instruments combining to create passages of beautiful melody ('The Web') and sheer pomp ('He Knows, You Know', 'Garden Party').

While there's no evidence to suggest a full-scale renaissance of the genre, as a starter for 10 in the progressive rock stakes, this album scores maximum points. **Chris Caddick**



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# THOMAS DOLBY

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF WIRELESS

ON ALBUM & TAPE

FEATURES  
'SHE BLINDED  
ME WITH SCIENCE'

