



Gwen Guthrie, Portrait (Island)
This is Guthrie's second solo album and it again features the production and playing talents of ace rhythm partners Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. *Portrait*, like all good black music, is aimed at both the heart and the feet. As the old cliché goes, "If this doesn't move you, you're already dead". Killer dancefloor tracks like 'Peanut Butter', 'Hopscotch' and Sly Stone's 'Family Affair' mix with the sublime Aretha-sounding 'You're the One'. If you are a fan of Sly and Robbie, just listen to the stylistic progression from the last Guthrie set. Instead of the ubiquitous syndrum sound, this album marks a return to a more "natural" rhythmic feel. Guthrie's *Portrait*, like Shalamar's *The Look* is modern funk at its best. **KB Imagination, In the Heat of the Night (Powderworks)**

Sylvester, All I Need (RCA)
Sequins and pearls style camp, falsetto disco with synth riddums from both UK's Imagination and San Francisco's Sylvester. Both albums contain significant singles - Sylvester's 'Don't Stop' (long version) and 'Do Ya Wanna Funk' (short version, why?) and Imagination's finest chart entries so far, 'Changes' (my fave) and 'Just An Illusion'.

Sylvester's hardhitting synth rhythm section is fab on 'Be With You' (6.38) but too much on HM romp 'Hard Up'. As there's very little variation in pace or theme, with this wall of sound Sylvester's made his most consistent dance album yet.

Though less homogenous in sound than Sylvester, Imagination also have their very own niche - producers Steve Jolley and Tony Swain define their distinctive if sometimes laboured sound. (Avoid

the over-produced imported *Night Dubbin'* remix LP.)

But Lee John is a star not humourless and frumpy like the S.F. kid, an able singer of an insubstantial song. The highpoints (the two singles and the title track) are ominous but though no other tracks stand out, it's all very listenable 80s lounge music in keeping with the groove of their neat singles.

MC Prince Charles and the City Beat Band, Stone Killers (Virgin)

Prince Charles, like the other Prince of funk, is no stranger to critical attention, however much of it seems a bit misconceived. There is nothing new or exciting here to demonstrate that this Prince is the new "thang" of black dance. Rather, *Stone Killers* and the previous *Gang War* are more interesting for the way Charles and producer Tony Rose use the influence of other funk artists like Earth, Wind and Fire, Rick James, Sugarhill and George Clinton to present a history of black dance music. The best and funkier tracks are 'I'm A Fool for Love', 'Bush Beat' and 'Cash (Cash Money)'. But check out George Clinton's mighty *Computer Games* album if you want the real blue blood of modern funk. **KB June Pointer, Baby Sister (Planet)**

Younger sister maybe, though hardly a baby, what with a full decade's recordings behind her. Not surprisingly, June's retained producer Richard Perry whose svengali-like control has charted the Sisters' success. So not surprisingly this sounds a lot like any Pointer Sisters' album - large dollops of showbiz-centred pop smeared over a base of R&B, with a ballad or two as chasers. There's a couple of competent Motown covers, but the standout track is a bouncing 'Ready For Some Action' which gains, courtesy of Norman Whitfield, one of his grand instrumental intros. **PT**



Steve Roach, Gorgonzola

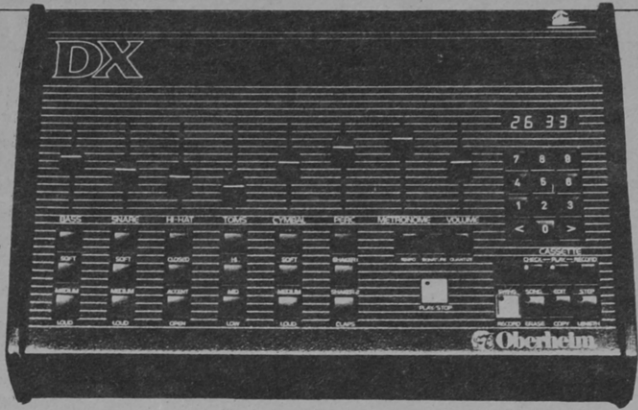
This tape was made up over a period of 18 months and that's reflected in its diversity. There are 18 tracks, ranging from some made up of snatches of found words like white man's scratch music to others that emerge as almost conventional songs. It's hard to believe that this was done by one man and a couple of cassette recorders. It's bursting with ideas - maybe too many for its own good. Perhaps its only fault is that it has become a little tied up in itself. It would be very interesting to hear Roach work with other musicians again. Even so this tape stands as a testimony to prodigious creativity. Available PO Box 47-295, Auckland, \$6. **Phantoms Ecco (Primitive Music No.2)**

It's nice to know there are people like the Phantoms beneath the surface of this country's musical network. The Phantoms do play primitive music, pieces testing rhythm and noise. Sometimes it doesn't work, as in the silly 'Always Beyond Control' (nice idea) but they're trying. Care has obviously gone into this (it's very well recorded) and it deserves to be heard by at least a few. And, like Mr Roach, the Phantoms have a sense of humour. Available from PO Box 2783 Christchurch for \$5. **Step Chant Unit, I.C. Dream**

One of the effects of the upsurge of tape released has been the setting of a standard well left of what might be found on vinyl. Perhaps if Step Chant Unit were on record they might not sound as pedestrian as they do here. Standard synthy stuff, marred mainly by the irritating 'Planet Zero'. Available 40 Hobson St, Hamilton \$4. **Silent Decree, In Loving Memory**
It's probably a good thing Silent Decree broke up - it's difficult to see where they could have gone from here. What we're left with is four pretty good slices of goth with bold vocals, new rockist guitars and bits of string. If you're going to buy it overseas then buy it here. If you live in Auckland you can get it for \$4 from Marcus Clothes Shop or Bluebeat. **Russell Brown**



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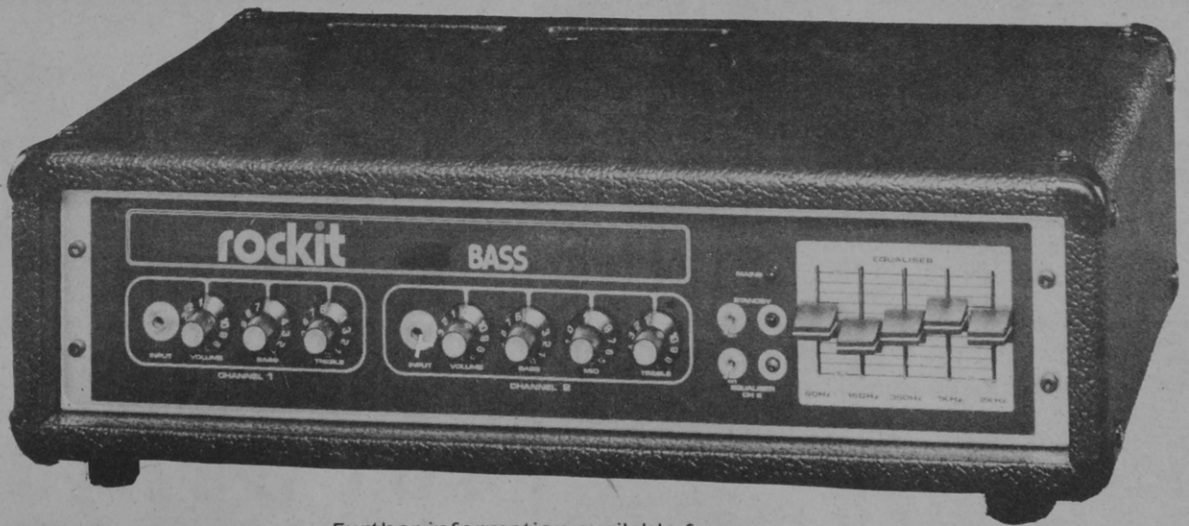
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