

Gerard Moody), the sing-along anthem 'Over My Head' and a rollicking Cold Chisel-type finale with 'Not the Girl'.

Coconut Rough, despite being formed six months ago fully deserve their ranking with NZ's finest. Visually, a treat and musically, full of ideas and promise. Kicking off with 'Strip the Reptile', a keyboards-based instrumental that grows with repeated listenings, their side works through three other McLennan compositions and 'Move II', an interesting (shades of the Blams) contribution from guitarist Mark Bell. Stand-outs are the hit single 'Sierra Leone' (faithfully reproduced) and the poppy encore 'Drawing Board'. Funky (thanks to bassist 'Choc') and inventive, this one-take live disc bodes well for future studio projects. The excellent cover, courtesy of Wayne Robinson, is the cream on a satisfying vinyl cake.

Chris Caddick

King Sunny Ade
Synchro System
Island

The question to be answered now is whether African music will transcend its current trendiness with white European audiences, or retreat to its home. This album doesn't really help to answer that question.

Not that there's anything wrong with *Synchro System*. On the contrary, it's filled with dark mystery and romance, spiced with a big shot of pure joy. A worthy successor to *Juju Music*. But it's unlikely to convert anyone not already bitten by the African bug.

If anything, this album is more traditional than its predecessor, relying less on electric instruments and more on the syncopated drumbeats. Listen to the opener, 'Synchro Feelings Mako', and you see where David Byrne got his ideas. It sounds effortless, until you try dancing to it and see how quickly you start to sweat.

Once again, you have to rely on the feel of the songs to get any kind of message. Subtitles are not provided. 'Mo Ti Mo' and 'E Wele' have a tenderness that almost certainly make them love songs, while 'Penkele' and the title track are frenetic celebrations of the dance, the famous talking drums making dazzling conversation, echoed by the vocalists.

Ade is apolitical, unlike fellow Nigerian Fela Kuti. His music portrays the brighter side of a very dark continent. Frankly, I'd welcome the release of Kuti's music here, to balance the picture. Nigeria is not an entirely nice place, and despotism is not solely the white man's prerogative.

Meanwhile, King Sunny Ade reigns supreme, in a fascinating, albeit small, kingdom.

Duncan Campbell
Various Artists
Shazam Battle of the Bands
Interfusion

I seem to remember that this night wasn't one of the most memorable I've had. Nevertheless here it is recorded for posterity.

Let's begin on a bright note. The two tracks from Gisborne's Marching Orders are enjoyable without being absolutely sparkling, but it sounds like fun. They will no doubt improve as they have personality in abundance and youth on their side, and the craziest percussionist you'll ever see.

Moving Targets' main problem is a lack of identity, still they do try very hard and it's very easy to hum along with their track 'What Did I Say' even if it sounds a little too familiar.

Stormbringer's contribution moves along with all the delicacy of a bulldozer and, at times, a tank. Blatantly sexist lyrics and borrowed riffs just reinforce the self parody that Heavy Metal seems to have gotten itself into. Oh, yeah, the song's called 'Self Destruct'. We live in hope.

There are a whole host of bands just like Blue Rock, all over the country playing at 21sts, rugby club socials, etc. So it must be relatively easy for them to find work, dunno why. However, where Blue Rock really astound is in their lyrics "Hey baby let's go out tonight and have a real good time." wow!

The White Boys are infinitely better than their one track 'What I Want' would indicate. Still the song sounds like it was actually written and it's played with a certain sense of feeling and meaning.

Which brings me to Auckland Walk who sound very pedestrian indeed. Just what the hell are they on about here? Repetitious, meaningless drivel played with all the dynamics of a cake of soap. Repeat 'I Can't Help Dancing' at least 150 times and you'll know

what I'm on about.

Yeah, I know they won, but recently Australia II won the America's Cup and that doesn't make me mad about Australians.

Then just to round the record off nicely we have Screamin' Lord Schofield who makes my mum sound like Nick Cave.

Full marks though to the people behind the whole thing, it's just a damn shame more of our really good bands weren't involved.

Alister Cain

The Ramones
Subterranean Jungle
Sire

Just when the year's prizes looked like being wrapped up along come a bunch of veteran outsiders with their best blow since *Leave Home*.

It's clear enough that the Ramones never left home. Their cunningly crafted chainsaw pop and B-movie lyrical lobotomies have been closer to the heart and truth of teenage wildlife in America than any of their contemporaries.

The discussion as to whether they're the original pinheads or geniuses masquerading as morons disappears as they hammer home three of their best insights into the psyche of the reject - 'Outsider', 'Psycho Therapy' and the power chord lurch of 'Time Bomb', the most perceptive look at the mass murderer syndrome since Talking Heads' 'Psycho Killer'. Hanging out with the gang is brilliantly caught with their customary rush on 'In the Park' and dopey love songs don't come any better than 'I Need Your Love', the easy balladeering of 'My Kind of A Girl' and the bizarre longings of 'Everytime I Eat Vegetables It Makes Me Think of You'.

Worth singling out for special mention is 'Somebody Like Me' which as well as being special in the music stakes, is as near to a Ramones' philosophy on life as you're gonna get, or need:

I am just a guy who likes to rock and roll

I am just a guy who likes to get drunk

I am just a guy who likes to dress punk

Get my kicks and live up my life.

Subterranean Jungle is an irresistible mix of 50s pop corn, sharp reports on the modern jungle and punk hyper-drive. It's the Ramones and rock'n'roll at their best.

George Kay

Bruce Cockburn
The Trouble With Normal
Big Time

"Oh Canada," Joni Mitchell used to sigh; she and Neil Young both had to leave it in pursuit of international success. Bruce Cockburn stayed put and, although it's taken 14 albums (give or take a hit single in 79), *The Trouble With Normal* could finally be bringing it all back home for him. Certainly *Normal's* easily his strongest set to surface in these climes. Cockburn's writing is consistently more pointed, more poignant than previously, from the reflective beauty of 'Waiting For The Moon' to the powerful revolutionary thrust of 'Tropic Moon'. (The latter song, written after a recent trip to Central America, is attracting considerable attention - and deserves more than any comparable Strummer/Jones posturing.)

Cockburn's not without his humour either. Just when you're wincing at the title of 'Civilization And Its Discontents', he disarms you with a couplet like:

I know a lot about alienated man

But we've all heard about as much of that as we can stand ... and sets it to an infectiously jerky Caribbean clockwork.

Vestiges of Cockburn's tendency to overwrite remain - the title track's verbal scurrying for instance - but this time out they're always offset by strong instrumentation. Again, the veritable image salad on 'Hoop Dancer' is chanted over swirling violin and a rhythm section that suggests how Talking Heads might have sounded as American Indians. Elsewhere soprano sax, piano and Cockburn's electric guitar solo to considerable effect. Musical styles range widely, absorbing and refracting influences from jazz, blues, reggae, rock, as well as Cockburn's own folksy roots. Top all this off with a series of engaging melodies - there's even one tailored for pop radio - and it is clear that, like fellow Canadians Mitchell and Young, Bruce Cockburn has the depth of talent to imbue the term 'singer/songwriter' with continued immediacy and importance. Check him out.

Peter Thomson

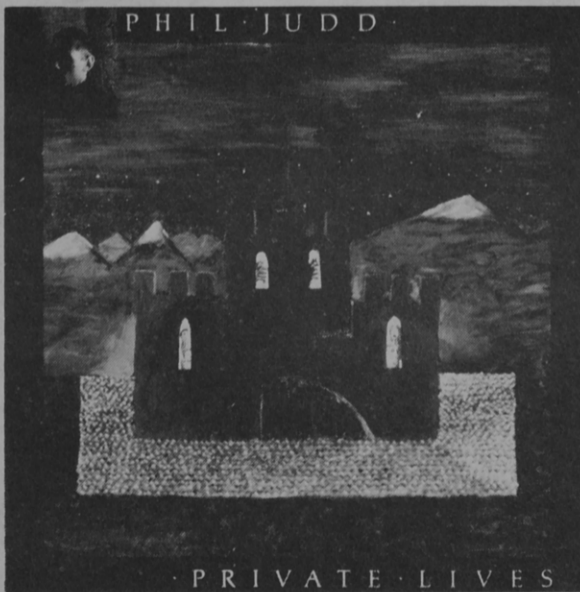
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