

ings influenced his own 60s work. His phrasing has been described as evoking generations of black bluesmen and here, with a backing band that includes Little Charly and Charles Brown, the black and white melting point sparks with 'that feel'. Hammond plays a range of styles and guitars (acoustic, electric, steel, dobro) and a harp that you would swear was Little Walter or Sonny Boy. It's all blistering good fun and (incidentally) produced by JJ Cale. No trouble at all. Oh, and for all your trivia freaks, a chap called Jimmy Hendrix played in one of Hammond's early 60s bands called the Screaming Night Hawks.

JOHN PILLEY

**BARK PSYCHOSIS**  
**A Street Scene**  
**(Caroline)**

Two quietly deranged, unreasonably pretty "songs" that owe nothing whatever to the post-Bloody Valentine English tradition of guitar-wash pop for all their hazy languor (although they do glance backward towards A.R. Kane, David Sylvian, 70s E.C.M. label jazz). *A Street Scene* sees delicate clusters of bass and guitar notes overwhelmed by hot flushes of trumpet, oboe and electronic noise. 'Reverse Shot Gunman' is more aggressive, structurally something to do with hard techno but driven by a battery of exotic drums and lit up samples that melt into the strangest guitar



Bark Psychosis

sound this side of King Loser's 'Most Avid Sonic Spectrum'.

MATTHEW HYLAND

**SAM FORD**  
**Unhinged (Jayrem)**

The most essential requirement in country music is sincerity. You may

have the songs, the voice, the chops - or you may not. It doesn't matter. If it ain't sincere, it ain't worth a damn. From his days leading the Verandah Band, as part of the Neighbours, or various other Auckland outfits, Sam Ford's sincerity has never been in question. It brings a

credibility to his inimitable cautionary tales that, with their dollops of humour, would otherwise be hokey.

Ford is like a Kiwi John Prine, writing about the daft scenarios ordinary folk get themselves in, and singing in a voice that makes the shaggy dog stories not just believable but often heartbreaking. Speaking of shaggy dogs, there's a doberman here whose head is shot off by his master. There's a man who falls in love with a woman who turns out to be his sister. 'Bad Moments' the song is called, and as Ford sings, we've all had a few. 'The Homecoming' has a sentimental lilt to it, till you find out the singer has just done 15 years for shooting his wife. And then there's 'Jack', a good keen man who breaks in the country with his bare hands and loves his Mum. Then she dies, and he's never the same.

There is usually a sting in the tail of Ford's songs, and helping you get there with sensitivity and spirit is a crack band of auckland country players led by Red McKelvie on guitar, and featuring Cath Newhooke on fiddle and Glenn Campbell's

pedal steel. The ballad 'I'm Losing You', with Mahinaarangi Tocker on guest vocals, is particularly moving. *Unhinged* may be slightly bent, but so was Ronald Hugh Morrieson. Sam Ford is the same kind of Kiwi yarn spinner.

CHRIS BOURKE

**JOHN LEE HOOKER**  
**The Essential**  
**(MCA/ BMG)**

Imagine, a 16 year old school kid walking into Roy Colbert's record shop with his saved up lunch money and hearing John Lee Hooker. The very first blues album that I bought was *Sings Blues*, just foot, guitar and voice recorded in the back room of a record shop far from these shores in 1948. It turned my head around and changed my life. This new comp covers material from 1966 to 1974 but it's still vibrant and essential.

John Lee was a bit of a musical prostitute, cutting songs for anyone that offered dollars. The 17 tracks here cover ABC, Bluesway, Impulse and Chess recordings. John Lee came from Clarksdale, Mississippi growing up with Muddy Waters. He left home by a different road, going to Cincinnati and Detroit and later San Francisco, rather than the traditional route to Chicago. Tracks appear from *Boom Boom Boom Boom* (1967), through the original 'Mister Lucky' to the over-arranged 'Bluebird' (1974). A personal highlight is 'Never Get Out of These Blues Alive' with Van Morrison on vocals (1971).

Recent albums have moved into the all stars bracket, re-recording the classics, but I can live with the fact that John Lee has got the recognition and financial security he deserves in his lifetime.

JOHN PILLEY

**MICHAEL MARTIN MURPHEY**  
**Cowboy Songs III: Rhymes of the Renegades**  
**(Warner Western)**

Murphey (remember 'Wildfire', the song about the horse in the snow?) dresses up as a cowboy for the album cover, rounds up a few classic western songs ('El Paso', 'Riders in the Sky') and ropes in some self-penned numbers about western

baddies. The guy's got a thing about cowboys - he's already released *Cowboy Songs* and *Cowboy Christmas (Cowboy Songs II)*. He does okay by the outlaws, even if the classics gun down the Murphey creations. But if 'El Paso' sounds great, Marty Robbins did it better, and give me Robert Earl Keen Jnr's murderous 'Sonora's Death Row' over this one. And 'The Ballad of Billy the Kid' is done at a geriatric pace unbefitting a rampaging outlaw - Ry Cooder beats Murphey to the draw there. Don't lynch him, he means well.

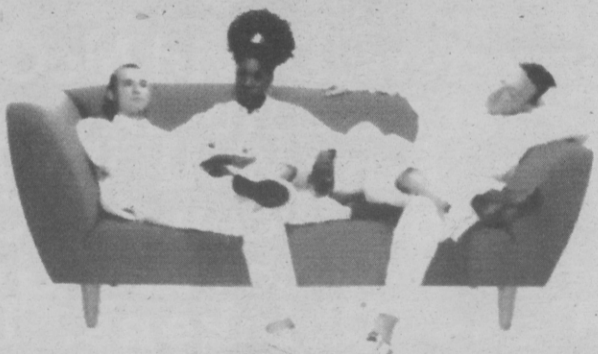
KEVIN NORQUAY

**PRONG**  
**Cleansing (Epic)**

NYC's noise rock scene throws up some interesting mutants at times and Prong is definitely one of these. They've taken the vibe that creates the likes of the Swans and Missing Foundation and applied it to rock for several album's worth of interest. This is a band who are most definitely rock but this rock has more in common with the violent sounds of Cop Shoot Cop than clowns like Anthrax. Prong use the instruments to make their point, sheets of guitar backed up by the very tight sounding rhythm section that now boasts ex-Killing Joke member Paul Raven on bass. All the elements of metal are there except that it's all been clipped, trimmed and hardened up. Take 'Snap Your Fingers, Snap Your Neck'. It could be Slayer at times but there's no hair shaking solos or rocker histrionics. The production is definitely the best a Prong album has seen, courtesy of Terry Date, who is best known for 'that Seattle sound'. It's not that *Cleansing* is some technical wonder but rather Date has managed to work the elements that make Prong worthy of attention above the rest of the metal bunch. He's taken the aggressive power and pushed that up front; loud, dirty guitars and a nice heavy bottom end that still manages to move and flow with the song. Vocals are for a large part reduced to being just another element in the wall of noise, which is fine as Prong really aren't a great lyric band and Tommy Victor can at best manage a relatively melodic scream. He does wrench some pretty



<sup>M</sup>People elegant slumming



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**The Self-Titled Debut Album**  
**From The Melbourne Sensation**

**("If there's a better band in the world, I'd like to see them." IN PRESS)**

Mixed by **Mike Fraser (Aerosmith, The Cult, AC/DC)**

