

# albums

into old or new trends, there are just additions and flavours. It's been a couple of years since the dub renaissance and, of the On-U sound brand, Dub Syndicate sound like the fittest contenders for survival.

*Echomania*, partly recorded in Jamaica and England, is an apt title for the sound the



charlatans

If you hear it enough it's kinda catchy. A bit like the band. Robert Zabrecky, the singer with this LA four-piece, has Gordon Gano's drawl and talent for killer pop choruses. Mix this with a Frank Black primal scream and some manic instrumentation and the Possums have all the markings of a College Radio hit.

The lyrics don't have the same magic but that's typical LA — go for the pop rush not the substance. But you learn to live with it because the sounds are so tasty. Like the opener 'Nerves', with its discordant piano bashes, racing double bass and off-beat open hi-hat. And the hits 'We're All Happy', 'Elevators' and 'Watch the Girl Destroy Me' all do what good pop songs should and stick in your head far too long. Possum Dixon. Possum Dixon. Possum Dixon. Possum Dixon. Possum Dixon. Possum Dixon. See, I told you it was catchy.

JOHN TAITE

**DUB SYNDICATE** *Echomania*  
(Flying In)

To the untrained ear there's something timeless about modern dub. Nothing really falls

Syndicate immerse themselves in. If dub hasn't really touched you before, it could be described as a realm inhabited by sparse (but dense) ambient reggae. Dub Syndicate take a mixture of Rastafarian imagery (like 'Dubaddisababa') and London street ('2001 Love'), sprinkle it with the occasional call and response backing vocal and then place it in huge, smokey, echoey swirls of beats and bass, mixed with guitar and keyboard effects. Guest vocals this time include the Disposable Heroes' Michael Franti and "his oneness" Lee Scratch Perry. But the real credit belongs to the members of this faceless presence, their hearts are obviously still full of groove and they sound as fresh as ever.

JOHN TAITE

**THE NIXONS** *Eye TV*  
(Pagan)

Richard Milhaus Nixon is one of history's great losers — even the Russians have snubbed him. Auckland band the Nixons are unlikely to have the same sort of historical impact but at least they're well liked. Their single 'Venus'

was voted numero uno for 1992 on bFM's end of year top fifty and no doubt this debut album will be similarly well received. That's if you can look past the first pair of singles from the album which are among its weakest tracks. Far more effective are 'I Fooled You' and 'Dreamthing' although singer Sean Sturm nearly blows it on the 'Dreamthing' outro, overcooking the vocals when he should have left his guitar to do the talking. Occasionally Sturm's vocals don't sit as comfortably as they should with the surrounding music but then Michael Stipe couldn't sing for toffee on *Murmer* and look where that got him. It's the rhythm section who really define the Nixons' sound — Michael Scott's angular basslines underpinning Mark Pollard's endlessly inventive drumming. And the production sounds like a million bucks, raw and vital. Sometimes they stumble (the rockist bombast of 'Tick Tock') but the final two tracks show the direction the Nixons should be taking. 'Underground' is an insidious number — languid yet able to create a mood and draw an emotional response — the sort of thing Julian Cope would write on a good day. Likewise 'The Fountain', steeped in the sort of Celtic imagery which was the calling card of Goblin Mix, blends its myriad elements to create one of the album's highlights.

MARTIN BELL



**ZZ TOP** *Antenna*  
(RCA/BMG)

As one of only a handful of bands I look towards to "rock out" (no Alice In Chains jokes please) (no Matthew Hyland jokes either, thank you) ZZ Top have sure put out some less-than-decent music in the past ten years. This is the post-*Eliminator* syndrome: Where that album cranked so high and mighty, everything since has been ZZ Plop by comparison. *Antenna* is a slight rectification: 'PCH' is their most right-

eously hot-wired, sparks-flying song since 'Legs,' and its good time surf vibe puts it right up with the best of Dick Dale and King Loser. Dependably, the lyrics are scholarly matters that matter: There's condoms ('Cover Your Rig'), cunnilingus ('Fuzzbox Voodoo'), a penis ('Lizard Life'), a pussy ('Cherry Red'), and a girl in a T-shirt ('Girl In A T-Shirt'). Billy Gibbons plays what sounds like the same guitar solo on every song, but it's a great one, quite unhinged really. And his patented pinch harmonics are exciting, as pinch harmonics go. Frank Beard and Dusty Hill don't lock into all the big grooves they should, but nonetheless there's some top Top to tap today.

ANDREW PALMER

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER** Various Artists  
(Island)

If you haven't seen the film yet, let me be the millionth person to recommend it.

The story of the wrongful imprisonment of the Guilford Four was aided by a great soundtrack. Opening with the rousing theme song, Bono chanting "In the name of whisky/In the name of song/You didn't look back/You didn't belong."

Along with excerpts of Trevor Jones' emotional film score, there were a couple of classic tracks used to enhance the events on screen. Hendrix's 'Voodoo Chile' is extracted from the opening chase and riot, the Kinks' 'Dedicated Follower Of Fashion' from the new suit scene, Bob Marley from the acid sessions and Thin Lizzy's version of 'Whisky In The Jar'.

But the closing track is the real ear opener. Sinead O'Connor singing the Bono penned 'Thief of Your Heart'. The mini-orchestra which accompany her sound belittled as she powers her way through this tear jerker. It's the bald one's best moment in years.

If you've seen the film, let me be the first person to recommend the soundtrack.

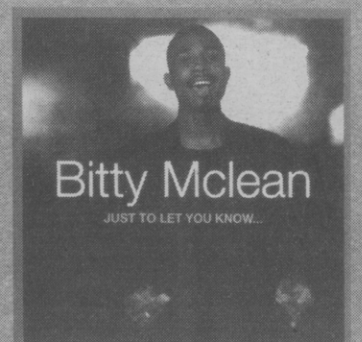
JOHN TAITE

**NICO** *Chelsea Girl*  
(Polydor)

An unexplained but more than welcome reissue of probably the only worthwhile folk-rock album ever made, complete with extraordinary liner notes explaining that Nico sang in "an existential pop style as earthy as Mary Travers' {Peter, Paul and Mary} yet more

## Bitty Mclean

JUST TO LET YOU KNOW...



FESTIVAL  
RECORDS

The debut album featuring the number one single 'It Keeps Raining' and the current hit 'Here I Stand'