

anything to you, then you'll appreciate this. The only thing that spoils this is the audience in between and over some of the songs going "woooahhh" and "yeeahh", and clapping over zealously. The whole audience probably consists of record company types who tend to do such things. Our editor has been known to walk into the office while this is on and go: 'Owhh, Luke Hurley again...' but I think he was joking.

SHIRLEY CHARLES

**DAVE DOBBYN** *Twist*  
(Sony)

It's funny what can happen to someone in a year. In 1993 Dave Dobbyn returned from Australia and gave us the dark and introspective *Lament For The Numb*, an album that was eventually explained as a portrait of a musician experiencing a period of severe self doubt and depression. Twelve months later, and on the shelf is the sweetness and light of his third solo album, *Twist*.

Produced by Neil Finn, it's an album from a man who's enjoying rediscovering New Zealand's particular style of green (the scenery, not the plant). Lyrics paint vivid pictures, especially on the gorgeous ballad 'It Dawned On Me', and on the trademark Dobbyn rocker 'What Do You Really Want'.

Elsewhere, he's quick to display his faithful melodic touch — on the Crowded House-like opener 'Lap Of The Gods', on the dreamy 'Naked Flame', where Emma Paki's backing vocals make a major impact, and on the awesome first single 'Language.'

*Twist* is Dobbyn pushing personal boundaries — most evident during the weird guitar conversation on 'Gifted' and during the spooky, smouldering 'Betrayal' — and if this keeps up, the flash of his brilliance can only get brighter.

JOHN RUSSELL

**WEEN** *Chocolate and Cheese*  
(White/Mushroom)

Politically correct Ween are not, and this is why I love them so. There is much fun to be had at being able to take an ugly situation and turn it into a funny song. Ween do this brilliantly, and disguise it so well some poor, sorry folks (70-90% maybe) are destined to never understand them and there lovely, sick little world. Ween have utilised the fact that they are actually very good songwriters and, unlike most of the songs on *Pure Guava*, they actually sing without the aid of wacky distortion techniques

(mostly).

Various singing styles are used, from falsetto notes on the very Prince-like, bitchin' ballad 'Freedom of 76', soft antagonising sweetness on 'Baby Bitch' (which sweetly croons at the end 'Fuck you, you stinkin' ass ho'), to deep, mysterious voices on 'Candi' and 'Spinal Meningitis (Got Me Down)'. The latter is a song about a-not-very-amusing-subject — a kiddie with spinal meningitis — which goes: 'Stinky vaseline mommy! / Please don't let me die.' Cripes, good luck to them with the Concerned Parents Society. 'Roses Are Free' has a nice tinkly Christmassy kind of feel, with some simple everyday sensibilities for you to think about: 'Take a wrinkled raisin and do with it what you will / Eat plenty of lasagne 'til you know that you've had your fill.' Mm, yes. Then there's 'The HIV Song', where bouts of music are interspersed with the Weens shouting the two-word lyrics, being 'AIDS' and 'HIV'. Not a hard song to get to know.

'Mister, Would You Please Help My Pony' is the current favo. Calling it quirky is not appropriate enough. It has a nice, circusy, merry-go-round feel (maybe it's the 'pony' association), and the lyrical content tickles my fancy no end. It also sometimes makes one want to kind of jump around and pretend you're a rabbit — it's uncanny: 'Mister, would you please help my pony / He's over there behind the tree / He's down in the dirt / Will ya help him? / I think it's his lung.' The girls at work, we laugh and laugh over this one, and yell to each other: "It's our song," and wacko things like that.

This album tends to make one a little overexcited at times. The music is varied/complex/happy/scary/mellow/psychedelic and everything else as well and it always brings a smile to one's face. It's that simple. Ween don't do music to make you feel sentimental or emotionally charged or have statements of heavy political weight for the kids. It's funny, not painful and not full of the seriousness that plagues so many bands — that's all.

SHIRLEY CHARLES

**THE CHILLS**

*Heavenly Pop Hits: The Best Of The Chills*  
(Flying Nun)

A Chills best of is never going to please all fans. Everyone will have favourites that have been omitted, but how can you argue against any of the 16 glorious moments assembled here?

*Heavenly Pop Hits* is a deliberately 'uptem-

po' collection of Chills music, featuring all 10 singles released by the band, plus a selection of sentimental, fast favourites like 'Never Never Go', 'This Is The Way' and 'Look For The Good In Others'.

Arguably the quintessential Chills song is 'Wet Blanket' (remixed here and with new vocals), not only is it the best unrequited love song ever written, it contains every element that made the Chills the ultimate pop band — beauty, understated simplicity and a melody that's definitely not from this place.

The first 1,000 copies of *Heavenly Pop Hits*, come with a bonus CD entitled *Ice Picks*, six b-sides/rarities, including a live version of 'Green Eyed Owl' and the criminally ignored 'I Wish I Could Do Without You', from the *Soft Bomb* sessions.

Listen to this album, and think about what hasn't been included, and it's just staggering that one person has the imagination to create pop songs of such a consistently perfect standard. You can't do without this.

JOHN RUSSELL



**SUEDE DOG MAN STAR**  
(Nude / Sony)

All the love and poison of London, ya say. Well, Suede have always been an acquired taste. First time round they were all Ziggy references, glam guitars and pompous Englishness, with clever, formulaic, indie pop hits and smoothies. *Dog Man Star* is more about opulent layers of melody, intricate structuring, experimental sound stretching and grandiose grace. It's big, real big. The sheer

over-the-topness could've gone horribly wrong, but it would seem that Suede (Mark I) have carried it off in the way Brett Anderson's lyrics deserve.

The battle march of 'Introducing the Band' and the first single, 'We Are the Pigs', sets the underlying theme of a frustrated, powerless youth culture. Smashed dreams of idols lost ('Heroine' about Monroe, 'Daddy's Speeding' about Dean) mix with the large quota of doomed suburban romances. 'The Wild Ones', succulent, passionate and beautiful, is the key to the musical direction within *Dog Man Star*. While Bernard Butler's intricate guitar does battle with a string section, Anderson flails: "We'll go from the bungalows where the debts still grow each day / We'll shine like the morning and sin in the sun — if you stay." There's no fence straddling. You'll either hate it or be where the grass is greener.

The last half of the album shows just how far Suede have come in a year. 'The Two Of Us', piano led, gives us Anderson in stunning vocal form. 'Black or Blue' is sweet and sour sorrow, like Khachaturian's 'Adagio' from *Sparticus* (*The Onedin Line* theme) for indie guitars. The sky-rise build of 'Asphalt World' is motorways ahead of most poignant moments on *Suede*, yet it only sets us up for the symphonic 'Still Life'.

What *Dog Man Star* lacks in pop hits, it makes up for in crafted elegant songs, which should shut up Suede's 'all hype' detractors for a bit. But did the Butler do it?

JOHN TAITE

**CHUG** *Sassafras*  
(Flying Nun)

You can't deny your past. Chug don't try to; sounding like a mish-mash of the Goblin Mix, Look Blue Go Purple and the 3Ds, with some Snapper thrown in. They've released an album that is immediately listenable, but not particularly unique to the Nun trained ear.

In New Zealand, Chug are going to be seen as 3Ds replacements if the originals all happen to tragically die in a plane crash. Chug didn't actually help differentiate themselves from the 3Ds by using David Mitchell as guitarist on their recent tour.

The boys fight amongst themselves over who is going to be David Mitchell and who is going to be Thurston Moore, but it's Norma O'Malley who sounds the best, her sweet vocals contrasting with the chugging rhythmic verses.

The Snapperish 'Golden Mile' is a showcase



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