



Liam Gallagher, Oasis

the final stamp on the flavour of Finn.

This isn't the Everly harmony album many were expecting, but a glimpse at the Finns' musical vocabulary before the production craftsmanship adds its polish. The language they grew up with is, of course, the Beatles. But it's the period that matters: this recalls *Magical Mystery Tour* and the 'White Album', when they were having some fun experimenting in the studio after the hard pop graft of *Sgt Pepper* was completed.

Just as clear, however, are the distinctive Finn touches: the Enzy paranoia of 'Eyes of the World', the swampy 'Suffer Never' that could be recent Crowded House. Their voices are often indistinguishable, with the unique harmonies which always result when siblings sing together. 'News Travels Fast' and 'Where is My Soul' in particular are glorious acoustic duets, the latter with a soaring middle eight that belongs in a Crowded House hit. The songs seem like works in progress, with verses and choruses that might fit elsewhere, and dodgy lyrics left in to retain the spirit of creativity. Giving the minimalism some flavour are the "found sounds" taken from whatever was at hand — wooden drums, scratched piano strings, muffled drums and tea-chest bass, a ukelele and backward tape loops.

Only 38 minutes long, with 11 tracks (and a couple of those could go), *Finn* bubbles with musical textures and gestures. It's a captivating insight into the brothers of invention.

CHRIS BOURKE

OASIS

(What's the Story)

Morning Glory?

(Sony)

I'm not going to rave about Oasis' melodic brilliance or their Beatlesque catchiness. I'm going to refrain from going on about Noel Gallagher's mouth watering array of tunes, about his brother Liam's much improved vocals, about new drummer Alan White keeping the whole thing together better than Tony McCarroll ever did. There'll be none of that here.

It's not all brilliance and ease. 'Hey Now' is a lazy dirge that sounds like Noel was down the chippy when they were recording.

And while it's just as well they had to remove 'Step Out', the horrible Stevie Wonder 'Uptight' rip off, it's absence has left an imbalance in the highs and lows.

Noel must have had a melancholic 1995 because *Morning Glory* is Oasis developing their delicate and intricate side. If you were a fan of 'Live Forever', 'Slide Away' and 'Supersonic', you'll love it. There are fragile hopes in their next brilliant single, 'Wonderwall'. The fizzing enormity of their finale, 'Champagne Supernova', will take up residence in your soul. 'She's Electric', akin to 'Digsy's Dinner', is a silly pop thing that'll stick in that part of your brain that makes you hum. 'Don't Look Back in Anger' has Noel on vocals (saving one of the best tracks for himself), and 'Cast No Shadow', about the Verve's Richard Ashcroft, is a sad, string section assisted number.

Looking at the wider picture, Blur's *The Great Escape* may well be a Brit-pop masterpiece, but *Morning Glory*, is a masterful piece of rock and roll — twice as easy to get into and twice as rewarding once you're in. It's full of what makes classics, erm, classic — crafted, mood swinging guitar melodies, vocals that pace you up and slow you down, a supportive rhythm section and, most importantly, a sense of magic that transcends the hype.

JOHN TAITE

SONIC YOUTH

Washing Machine

(Geffen)

This is where smart guitars go when they transcend this plane — to a sonic jam store in the sky, where they get to play not only with



Sonic Youth

themselves or other bass guitars and drum kits, but with fellow guitarists!

'We got to change the way that you feel,' go Kim Gordon's spooky vocals on the album's first lyric. Sonic Youth don't mess about doing exactly that, by dishing out an opening trio like 'Becuz', 'Junkie's Promise' and 'Saucer-Like'. These sound like spontaneous jams, but you know multiple guitar tunings alone make it painstaking to maintain such an air. Such paradoxes are an essence Sonic Youth have retained in spades on *Washing Machine*.

Not every song is so daringly precarious in its sonic structure — as in the case of 'Little Trouble Girl', which, nevertheless, innovatively divides it's schizophrenic shared vocals between Kim Gordon and guest singer Kim Deal. This is but one highlight of a set of consistently cool vocal performances and fascinating Beat-like musings which peaks mid-album on 'No Queen Blues', where Thurston has tuned his 'Nic Fit' siezures to exhilarating effect. A noisy washing machine has never sounded so good.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Help

(Polygram)

Let's put aside all the 'it's such a good cause' cop-outs (Bosnia, we know). Let's forget all the recording industry records it broke (fastest album ever recorded, all in a day, and the fastest record into the shops, less than a week after recording). Is it any good? Yeah, well, sort of.

A lot of the better tracks come from the electronic side of things. Makes sense, really, because they would've had most of their ideas and samples all ready to boot up. Orbital's 'Adnan', Portishead's ghostly (as usual) 'Mourning Air', and the Chemical Brothers/Charlatans collaboration 'Time for Living' all top the 'could be a single' chart. Radiohead providing a sad number called 'Lucky', where they try out a bit of Pink Floydian theory, and Neneh Cherry teams up with her hubby's band Trout, for the awfully good but awfully titled '1.2.3.4.5'.

There are some rewarding team-ups. Paul Weller and Paul

McCartney's version of 'Come Together', erm, came together. Ex-Special Terry Hall does a cute version of 'Dream A Little Dream' with Salad. The Manic Street Preachers deserve a mention for their bizarre, Richieless version of 'Rain Drops Keep Falling On My Head'. They're probably hoping he'll come out of hiding (or the ground) just to kick their asses for it.

Of course a lot of tracks sound hastily recorded and some make the bands sound terrible. I hear Ian Brown had two teeth knocked out by a fan the other week. The poor fan had probably just heard the atrocious version of 'Love Spreads', where Brown sounds like the laziest, most boring singer on the planet. Here's hoping the same guy gets around to Suede, for murdering 'Shipbuilding'.

JOHN TAITE

THE SMASHING PUMPKINS

Mellon Collie and

the Infinite Sadness

(Virgin)

If you're one of those nay sayers who's harped on about the indulgence of double albums since you heard the Smashing Pumpkins were making one, today is the day you must repent. There is nothing indulgent about taking the space you need for the body of work you have created. That it should fit so perfectly onto two CDs (that's 28 songs in a neat 2.02, tally fiends) with nary a bum note in earshot may be the stuff miracles are made of, but so was the story about Jesus divvying up bread, and no-one ever accused him of being an indulgent man, no matter how many buns he dished out.

Mellon Collie's discs are entitled 'Dawn to Dusk' and 'Twilight to Starlight'. By the mere nature of these names, one can expect some crossover in the themes they imply (have you ever tried to separate when dusk becomes twilight?). The album sets out on a thread as gentle as the first fingers of dawn, with the strings and piano of the album's sans vocal title track, but quickly escalates into the kind of stunning string-pop the Pumpkins do so well on 'Tonight, Tonight'. Things get rockin' from this point in, but that thread strung to the beginning is still retained at the



Green Day

heart of even the most furious numbers (the best of which is the awesomely glam rockin' 'Bullet With Butterfly Wings'), polished off completely ('Stumbleine'), given a cameo appearance as calm in the storm ('Porcelina of the Vast Oceans'), and given the odd zany jiggle ('Lily (My One and Only)' and 'We Only Come Out at Night').

Closing tracks 'By Starlight' and 'Farewell and Goodnight' take things full circle. It makes you wish the album really did last a whole day, for it would be the perfect soundtrack to coax you out of bed, match the agonies and ecstasies every day brings, then tuck you up under the watchful gaze of an ever changing moon sometime before dawn.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

GREEN DAY

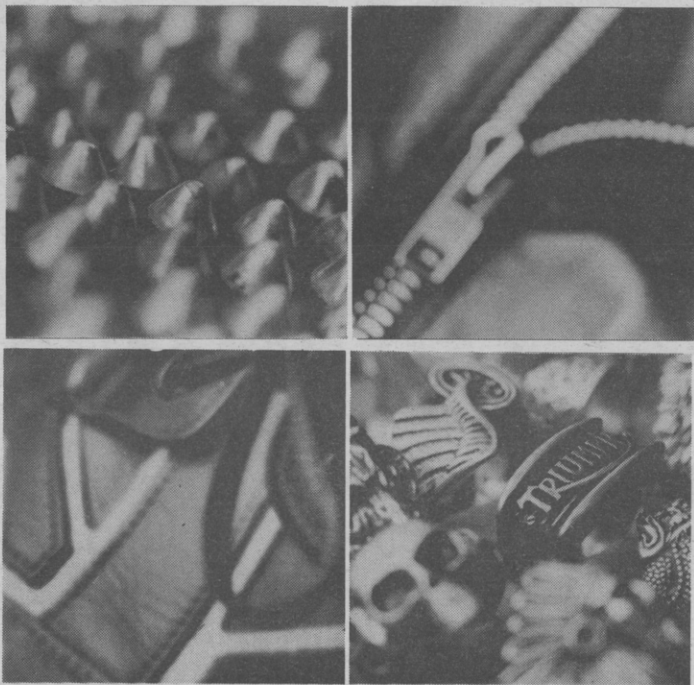
Insomniac

(Reprise)

The band with more good tunes and pop sensibilities than the pop-a-pop Popsicle Band are back, a back in the land. After having a wee bitty bit of success with their last album, Green Day have delivered up another platter of furious, frolicsome feisty rawk and roll. The opening track, 'Armitage Shanks', acts as a natural lead in from *Dookie*, proving that fame, money, wealth, more wealth, and not forgetting lashings of wealth, have not stopped Green Day from writing a rippingly catchy tune. Having suckered the listener in, Green Day then turn up the amps and let rip with all the snot they can muster. Tune after tune assail the listener's ears as *Insomniac* comes across like *Dookie's* evil, uglier twin brother

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