

DANCE REVIEWS

ROBERT MILES

'Children'
(Deconstruction)
SASHA

'Be As One' (Deconstruction)
With the emergence of the wibbly, wobbly, dribbly (slightly tedious) 'goa' sound, which doesn't really do it for me, it's refreshing to hear a different take on trance. 'Children' was originally released on Platypus, the quality UK trance label. Now, the bio bangs on about 'Symphonic Trance' and 'Dream Music', but I suspect they are just trying to distance themselves from any goa connotations. Meaningless categories aside, this is very smooth, liquidous, banging trance, with a message which is something along the lines of children being the future. Well, obviously. Then we have Sasha. He's getting quite good at creating epic journeys fusing the soul and emotion of house with the dreamy trippiness of trance. 'Be As One' builds slowly from a sinister intro into a throbbing bassline and then, of course, the moving vocals go to work on your emotions. On the flipside another treat, 'Heart of Imagination', which is by Sasha and Brian Transeau, a combination made in dance floor heaven. Another deep, emotional, building trancer, this has the trippiest, most life affirming piano line ever, backed up with scorching production and deep beats. Deconstruction, back on the money.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Total Science (Blackmarket)
A drum 'n' bass compilation called *Total Science* is always going to veer towards so called 'intelligent drum 'n' bass', a term which has rightfully been rejected by the chief exponents of the genre. Although useful, it's a wee bit snobby and implies that everything else is unintelligent. Anyway, most of the tracks here are along the lines of 'Aquatic' (deep throbbing basslines, deep strings, trancey rolling breaks, à la LTJ Bukem) or 'Jazzy' (self-explanatory, Wax Doctor-, Alex Reece-style) drum 'n' bass, with a few more ragga inclined cuts (they're not bad) thrown in for good measure. Highlights include 'Never as Good' by Wax Doctor, with the dreamy 'Open up your mind, never as good' vocals, which complement a trancey break, muted horn, nice bass and some trippy synth work. 'Feenin' by Jodeci is remixed in fine style by LTJ

Bukem. He keeps the vocals to a minimum and puts them through some efx which work well. The break is typical Bukem, rolling along nicely as some subtle melodies float in and out of the mix before a wall of bass eventually hits, taking the whole thing to a new level. Absolutely sublime.

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Wipeout (Sony)
It seems this compilation functions as a promotional vehicle for the Sony Playstation. Rather than coming attached to a music bio, it comes with an advert for Wipeout — a demolition derby of a computer game featuring music by Orbital, who feature on the soundtrack, I mean, duh, compilation of the same name. The Orbital track 'Wipeout (PETROL)' is a bit disappointing, but then, it does sound a bit like computer game music, kind of dark and petrolhead. The rest of the compilation is made up of tried and tested fav's like 'Afro Ride' by Leftfield, the Hardfloor reworking of 'Blue Monday', 'Age of Love', 'Chemical Beats' and so on. The music, then, is mostly good, as I'm sure is the computer game, but this is the sort of dance compilation my brother would buy. He's a BCA student who liked grunge, if you catch my drift. (No disrespect intended to BCA students, the grunge brigade or indeed, my bro. Hey, man, wassup?)

TOKYO GHETTO PUSSY

Disco 2001 (Sony)
Very odd, this one. The CD is very nicely presented with a little booklet containing instructions on how you too can be a Tokyo Ghetto Pussy (assuming that this is indeed the image you wish to cultivate). I'm a little unclear as to whether this originates in Japan, or is just a slick marketing ploy. Oh, well, who cares? The music is hardcore handbag. Fast, ravey techno beats, combined with vocals and the Tokyo Ghetto Pussy attitude. Certainly not to everyone's taste, but ideal for those girly lipstick and mirror bonding sessions before going out on Saturday night. Will go down a storm at the next Cheap Sex.

CROOKLYN DUB CONSORTIUM

Certified Dope, Vol. 1 (WordSound)
SPECTRE
The Illness (WordSound)
Two heavy duty dub offerings from the grim streets of New York. Crooklyn Dub Consortium is a compilation of dub excursions from the various disturbed souls that inhabit the nocturnal domain of



The Bucketheads.

Crooklyn, NYC. This ain't warm Jamaican dub, and it's not exactly the sound of the stoned ON-U crew. No, these guys have been smoking some seriously stinky ganja, and come up with an altogether darker sound. The ballistic basslines and staggering beats are there, but it's all infused with the atmosphere and dread of the darkest trip-hop.

The Illness is a whole album of some of the illest, darkest, murkiest, dubbed out hip-hop grooves ever conceived. As the bio says: 'Like Stephen King on wax, Spectre spins the soundtrack to your darkest nightmares,' this is some evil shit for the dark hours, and it's truly disturbing folks.

SPECTRE

The Missing Two Weeks (Covert Dubs) (BMG)
And just to be confusing, another dub album from a group called Spectre, this time from the UK. Much warmer, cosier, more ambient and, erm, more backgroundish than *The Illness*, Spectre make warm, fluffy, computer generated dub music. The beats are phat and there's lots of 'Let's put an echo on the last drum kick of that bar, and reverb the fuck out of the bass, and pan that vocal from left to right, and who's rolling the next spliff anyway?' sort of behaviour going on to liven things up. The vocals are confined to the 'Open your mind, it's a space in time', 'Good vibrations' variety but they are very pleasant. Not exactly groundbreaking stuff, then, but perfect as background wallpaper.

THE BUCKETHEADS

All in the Mind (Positiva)
Kenny Dope is the man behind the Bucketheads who were behind last year's huge *The Bomb!* (These Sounds Fall Into My Mind). Now Kenny (also one half of Masters at Work) has always been a prolific sort of a producer, so he's gone and done a Bucketheads long-player. Basically it's a bunch of sample based house and hip-hop tracks stuck together and called an album. I wasn't expecting it to be great, and hey, it's not, but it's not awful either. The house tracks are disco orientated and

BACK BEAT

Some fashion victims would say keeping traditions alive is an irrelevancy in popular music, but how do you tell that to a musician who can't get his teeth fixed? **Willie De Ville** is one legend who's still looking sharp. On *Loup Garou* (eastwest) he quickly hits his stride, strutting down Bourbon whistling 'Da Do Ron Ron'. He now lives in the Big Easy, not the Big Apple; unlike his recent outings however, this album of originals takes nothing from New Orleans other than attitude and spicy variety. Here Spanish Johnny hangs out in Irish bars to fight over white trash girls, while Phil Spector rules the jukebox.

In *Q's Jook Joint* (Qwest), **Quincy Jones** opens his astounding address book to invite us to a state-of-the-art celebration of black music with an unlimited budget. In this cast of thousands — even Marlon Brando takes a part — the biggest star is Q's ego, and with his CV, can we complain? The couplings are smart (Ray Charles with Chaka Khan, Nancy Wilson with Queen Latifah) but it sinks on its own slickness — and due to gatecrashers like Phil Collins and Bono. Hey boys, you're in the wrong part of town.

Welcome on both sides of the tracks, though, are New Orleans roots-rockers the **Subdudes**. Until *Primitive Streak* (High Street/BMG), though, their Caddy looked like stalling. Here they stay true to their minimalist template — impassioned, spontaneous harmonies, and a tambourine for a drum kit — but invite some guests for variety (violins, horns, Bonnie Raitt on slide). Their country soul ballads echo the mellow moments of John Hiatt and Los Lobos.

Bonnie Raitt has more right than most to call her live album *Roadtested* (Capitol), but did she have to invite all her friends? Duets with Bryan Adams and Jackson Browne are marketing, not music. Yes, that was a fine late-career trilogy from Bonnie, but do we need a double-CD note-perfect replay? This brings back the 70s and... ELP's *Welcome, My Friends, to the Show that Never Ends*.

Ray Charles is like a guest on his own record in *Strong Love Affair* (Qwest). The voice is still there, but I think he sent it in by fax. The backings were recorded in that mecca of soul, Paris. The slick craftsmanship is like aural comfort food, soothing (ie, inoffensive), familiar (ie, cliched). The only standout is the gospel duet Ray produced himself: 'I Need a Good Woman Bad' (okay, the lyrics aren't gospel).

On *Heart & Soul* (Qwest) gospel Grammy monopolists the **Winans** are like a choir of Stevie Wonders. But before you invite them to a party, be warned they'll bring their Bibles. Apart from the occasional torchy ballad ('Yeah Yeah Yeah', 'I

Need You'), it's like being smothered by harmony.

Cunning Texan bluesman **Lightnin' Hopkins** made a lot of records, asking for payment in cash after every song. He was popular and prolific, and he spent everything he earned. But that gave him plenty of tragicomic stories to tell, with a guitar that could seduce or boogie down. Occasionally a mere journeyman, often a genius, on *Country Blues and Autobiography in Blues* (Tradition/Rykodisc) you can see the link with contemporary Texan country songsmiths such as Guy Clark, Townes Van Zandt and Jimmie Dale Gilmore. These immaculately remastered late-50s recordings are a worthy introduction.

Buddy Holly was another Texan master of song, revered by the Beatles and all the participants in *Not Fade Away* (MCA), yet another tribute album. The performers are intelligently chosen (Waylon Jennings, who missed the fatal plane; the Band; the Mavericks; Mary Chapin Carpenter; Steve Earle) but they all reek with reverence. (Except for the "Free As a Bird"-style "new duet" between the Hollies and the ghost of Buddy, which is not just slick, but sick — the great thing about necrophilia is the victim can't sue.)

Now that St Patrick's Day is lasting a week in New Zealand, the timing couldn't be better for another reissue on Tradition, **The Lark in the Morning**, which features Irish folk legends Liam Clancy, Tommy Makem and friends. Taped by folklorists in living rooms and saloons throughout Eire in the 50s, the variety and purity of these solo performances is spellbinding, like hearing the Muddy Waters plantation tapes, except you're witnessing the birth of country music.

Having not written a song in four years, bombastic tunesmith **Neil Diamond** travelled to Nashville for inspiration. On *Tennessee Moon* (Columbia) he collaborates with the town's equivalent of his Brill Building days, ie, songwriters to order. Yes it's portentous, corny and hammy (sounds like a good burger); that's what our aunts love about Neil. But at least he's hired good players and, unlike Ray, sounds like he's aware of what's happening.

Mr Holland's Opus (Polydor) is another feel-good soundtrack aimed at baby boomers who only hear Classic Hits. Being (I guess) the story of a music teacher who wasn't listening to *Rubber Soul* in 1965, it coughs up some surprises ('One, Two, Three' and 'A Lover's Concerto' were nameless songs way back in my sub-conscious). But, unlike the intelligently selected *Casino* or *Dead Presidents*, this grab-bag has no concept other than exploitation of emotions. (I mean, 'Imagine'?!? And surely 'Beautiful Boy' is below the belt!). **JAMES BOOKER**

Produced by Dallas Austin & Babyface.
Includes the hit 'Sentimental' and new single 'Who Do You Love'.

Deborah Cox

THE TONY RICH PROJECT

'WORDS'

A unique blend of hip, acoustic folk-flavoured pop, sweet & sensual soul and thoughtful lyricism. Features the Top 5 single 'Nobody Knows'