

the two has to go to *I Swinger's* 'Theme From "The Tiki Wonder Hour"', and competition is seriously stiff enough to warrant this mention.

If you're serious about your cheese — as Combustible Edison certainly are (I'll bet Esquivel is blissfully unaware of the fact he'd even be considered in such a category by the great unwashed — that is, if any of them knew who he was) — you won't find better nibbling than these two. Either would make a dandy soundtrack to your next stylin' crossword party or apéritif afternoon.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

SKINNY PUPPY

The Process
(American/BMG)

During the recording of this album, Skinny Puppy member DR Goettel died at the age of 31. This event possibly accounts for the album's black feel, but the industrial-techno pioneers always were that way inclined. Sampled riffs laid over electronic beats with menacing vocals, the results are cold and clinical. 'Hardset Head' is taut and aggressive, while 'Curcible' welcomes you to electronic noise hell. Produced by David Ogilvie and Skinny Puppy, *The Process* is suitably bleak and sparse. Technology is viewed as a tool rather than a constraint, thus the vast array of electronic sounds, beats, and samples integral to the final result. Harsh, detached vocals communicating a dark futuristic vision, the masses controlled by the few, hell on earth and all that. Where peers KMFDM, Filter, Nine Inch Nails etc tend more towards metal, Skinny Puppy stick to the depersonalised technology tip, sculpting noise. The ultimate dismal post-modernist statement.

GAVIN BERTRAM



Poe

KNIGHTSHADE

Knightshade
(Hark)

Remember when these guys toured the country constantly and even had singles in the charts? What a surprise when lovely, polite, *Our World* TV presenter Gale Ludlow rocked out with the boys! Now they've put 13 of their best known songs onto CD so they can stake their rightful place in New Zealand rock history. Unfortunately they couldn't get the original master to their own back catalogue, due to corporate complications, so have had to re-record everything.

'Out for the Count' doesn't quite pack the same punch, and 'Blood and Money' could never come across like it did at gigs, but overall, Knightshade have done well to recapture the spirit of the music they made in the 80s ('The Physical You' and the optimistic 'Keep Trying', for instance). They always had good guitarists, and on these versions main player Rik Bernard is joined by new member Simon Garlik. Paul Martin returns for one track, and appearing on backing vocals is (you guessed it) radio presenter Gael Ludlow.

GEOFF DUNN

NOFX

Heavy Petting Zoo
(Epitaph)

They refuse to do interviews or release singles, and don't make videos, yet Californians NOFX have sold over a million albums for Epitaph, combining with the Offspring and Rancid to make label owner (and Bad Religion guitarist) Brett Gurewitz a very wealthy man.

On *Heavy Petting Zoo*, NOFX remain within the perimeters that defined their five previous Epitaph albums, and the

The Cakekitchen



almost-hits 'Beer Bong' and 'Vegetarian Mumbo Jumbo'. Without a backward glance they ignore speed limits and the PC craze, to blast through a baker's dozen of sharp, pop-soaked punk tunes. NOFX go for that edgy, West Coast, post-hard-core feel — tight melody lines and punchy rhythms — but lead guy Fat Mike's bratty, childish voice, combined with a collective sense of humour based so firmly in the toilet, means they avoid being just another bunch of tight-ass Minor Threat wannabes. Musically this is all good rockin' fun, real rough around the edges stuff, but every song is a story, and half are tales of woe that betray the invincible, anthemic vibe of the music. Sure, Fat Mike sings about sex with fat chicks, but he also covers alcohol as an escape, and soul destroying boredom, while the album's top moment, 'Drop The World', though fast and furious, deals with the heroin overdose of a friend.

Considering the flood of both good and bad punk records on the market right now, *Heavy Petting Zoo* boasts just the right blend of melody, pace, and sense, to ensure NOFX are at the peak of the pile.

JOHN RUSSELL

SUGGS

The Lone Ranger
(Warners)

Taking time out from Madness' bloody 'Last Reunion Ever' concerts, lead singer Suggs has actually bothered to make an album this decade. (Un?)fortunately his cover of Supergrass' 'Alright' is missing. And, hey, let me take a moment to turn into a slobbering, out of my head fanatic for a sec', and say *buy, buy, buy* 'Going Out', make it Number 1! What a ba-loody great single from the Super Gs.

Er, where was I? Oh, Suggs. Poppy? Most definitely, but then, so were

Madness. Trading in on his past? Of course he is, but then, it is the 90s.

Opens with not a bad version of 'I'm Only Sleeping', which didn't piss me off despite plundering my favourite Beatles album. It's the best track here, actually. 'Camden Town', the single, bobbles along about Doctor Martins and squillions of tourists in said markets. The John Barry (or more likely, Portishead) influenced 'Green Eyes' is a ghostly dock ballet. And apart from the awful 'Cecilia' cover, Suggs hasn't done a bad job of creating a comeback worth a listen. Without a 'proper' band it does sound a bit sterile, but half of the album has been produced by Sly and Robbie so it's got its heart in the right groove

JOHN TAITE

MACHINES OF LOVING GRACE

Gilt
(Festival)

Gilt reminds me of the first time I heard the textured fury and structured hooks of *Pretty Hate Machine*. It reminds me of the first time I was hit by the pounding drums and pummeling guitars of *Psalm 69*. But Machines of Loving Grace have moved beyond the Ministry and Nine Inch Nails comparisons.

Gilt is a move to a more live sound for the Machines. Whereas before they'd create on computers and convert it all to instruments for their live shows, this time they went into the studio with Tool producer Sylvia Massy to try for some 'band' grunt. And they've got it. Tracks like 'The Soft Collision' sound like post-Shihad Killing Joke, but there are still elements of their industrial heritage on board. Waves of static still wash over the proceedings, tracks like 'Sonic Temple' flip to codas of

drum machine groove, and hellish samples are provided by Einsturzende Neubauten.

If Jim Carroll's *Basketball Diaries* was set in late 90s, Machines would offer a bleak, frustrated soundtrack. 'Richest Junkie Still Alive', 'Casual Users', 'Suicide King' and lyrics like, 'It takes the fear away from me', in 'Last [fucking time]', all seem to point to the obvious. But their painful poetry, like, 'her beauty spilled out across the highway like a brilliant trail of venom and diamonds', makes their songs worth a closer listen than most.

JOHN TAITE

BLISTER

Busted
(Shock)

INSURGE

Speculator
(EastWest)

REGURGITATOR

Regurgitator
(EastWest)

Three Australian second division bands gnawing at the fringes produce some welcome unpleasant surprises. Blister are best. Dressed as though Seattle shorts and black sneakers could get them a bit part in *Singles*, they redeem themselves by blasting out a likeable volley of third generation 90s punk on the seven-track *Busted*. On 'Axe to Grind' they're pissed off with the government, while on 'Cowboys in Rubber Gloves' they warn of the dangers of 'riding bareback'. Whatever could they mean? On the darker side they take on incest on 'Eddie Monster', then follow that by setting fire to Elvis' 'Suspicious Minds'. Perceptively dumb fun.

Insurge are aiming at a slightly different (stock) market. *Speculator* is an all out attack on the capitalist notion of corporatisation, market speculation, the fostering of the rich at the expense of the poor, and the illusion of freedom in the

age of the new right. In other words, this should have been done by a New Zealand band. Vocalist/guitarist/writer Chris Dubrow is like a nine inch nail in the head of the business world in the rousing, rasping 'Speculator' and 'Not So Free'. It's great to hear passion and anger aimed at the complacent materialism of the post-modern world. It would be too hopeful to think that Insurge have started a revolution.

Meanwhile, Regurgitator's subversiveness on their self-titled mini-album comes from a different angle, and is more general in its invective. There's a Beefheartian narrative before buzzsaw guitars bring 'Like it Like That's' sex-as-consumerism into a more orthodox fold. And the controlled cacophony of 'Nothing to Say' makes an overdue point that most bands and most songs are indeed vacuous. That particular point would've been better made by a band with more substance than Regurgitator, but all up, this band is making its mark.

GEOFF KAY

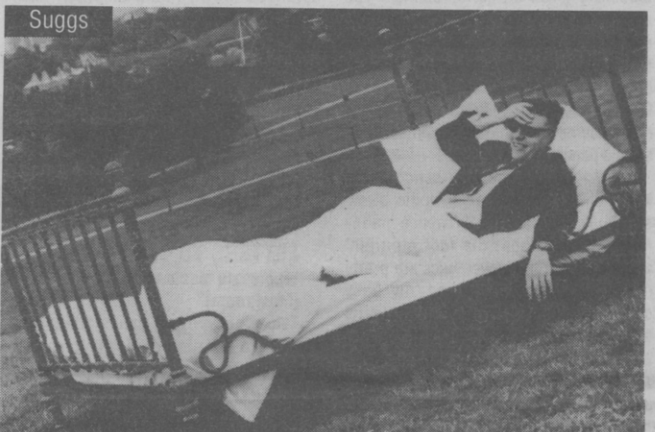
BAD RELIGION

All Ages
(Epitaph)

LAGWAGON
(Hoss)

(Fat Wreck Chords)

Like it or not, this latest wave of punk is the one that's made that big crossover into the public consciousness, and it's going to be the stuff that influences many pre-teens into unwise hair colour and clothing decisions. LA's Epitaph label can be blamed for a lot of this, and Bad Religion are pretty much responsible for Epitaph existing. The band's history is traced tidily on *All Ages*, which is a compilation of stuff from their five independent albums, although it features nothing from *Into the Unknown*, the ill-advised prog-rock outing. I get the feeling they like to be reminded of this as much as I



Suggs

The Blue Moods Of Spain

"This record is my bible."

- Melody Maker

"Blurs the lines between West Coast jazz, 60s soul, blues and the most nodding off sounds of the Velvet."

- LA Weekly

"Atmospheric West Coast groove at a pace slower than the pulse of a hibernating squirrel."

- NME

"Captivatingly melancholy."

- New Zealand Herald

"It conjures up a meticulously arranged, slow-moving universe."

- New York Times

GLOBAL
ROUTES
MUSIC