



'Rowboat' this one does. And when a supporting cast includes Flea, half of Fleetwood Mac, Tom Petty and a bunch of his Heartbreakers, and Sylvia Massey engineering, you just know the teenagers are gonna be kneeling at this altar alongside their parents and grandparents.

He may be no saint, but wouldn't you rather your kids worshipped the Man in Black than the Red Wiggly One, mums and dads? Face it, if he's still penning songs about everlasting love the likes of 'Meet Me in Heaven', he can't be so bad (even if he is *bad*, in a gettin' real gone kinda way on plenty of other tracks here, kids).

All I wanna know is when they're gonna start teaching these tunes in primary schools, so Cash can truly conquer the generation gap, and ensure himself a spot in the consciousness of generations to come.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

TOOL

Aenima
(Zoo)

In 1993, Tool dragged progressive rock into the alternative arena with their album *Undertow*. Their tonally dynamic epics, infused with dispassionate precision and obtuse intellectual mysticism, dealt a wounding blow to a genre rapidly collapsing under the weight of ham-fisted recyc-riffs and second-hand Seattleisms. Although they've lost a bass player somewhere along the way, 1996 sees the rebirth of Tool — sound and attitude intact — with the sprawling opus of *Aenima*, which will undoubtedly inflict as much collateral damage on the bland alternative landscape as its predecessor did.

All the ingredients that made the last album so intense are here, though this time round it's more fluid and orchestrated, and very long — there's even an intermission half way through (perhaps the comparative brevity of cuts like 'Stinkfist' — not 'Skinfist' as Max TV have decided — indicate intended singles, so just wait for the fun when Max have to rename 'Hooker With a Penis').

Of course, this is not an easy listening experience. The negative charge of *Aenima* creates an atmosphere so stifling and claustrophobic, the pockets of breathing space given by the 'break-down sections are a welcome respite from the overall air of nervous tension. Still, the uncomfortably sinister vibe remains throughout — it's as if they've scored a residency as the in-house band somewhere in Hell.

The only problem may be the future

— how far can Tool take their dark brand of prog rock, before it disappears up the same passage 70s prog went?

TROY FERGUSON

STRAWPEOPLE

Vicarious
(Sony)

Yes, it's easy to say it's not the same since Tierney left, but to be honest, there isn't much change here. Early 90s, adult-oriented, electronic fruit punch is what they excel in, and that's exactly what we get. Not so much easy listening as easy to listen too. Fiona McDonald's vocals glisten as usual — blah, blah, blah. And with Casserly striding through media ligs like a drunken Colossus, it's hardly surprising he's picked up a few late night listening trends.

'Spiller' has a very lounge 'ba-be-da-be-dup' chorus, and 'Somebody Else' has a rather ugly attempt at a drum and bass loop. True to its name, *Vicarious* is packed full of knowledge, but lacking in actual experiences. There's a sickly sophisticated comfiness, that longs for Cognac and Cubans and maintaining the lifestyle to which it has become accustomed. New Zealand's Pet Shop Boys have become New Zealand's Pet Shop Boy and Girl With Too Much Mascara — which unfortunately, doesn't sound nearly as catchy.

JOHN TAITE

GEORGE CLINTON

Greatest Funkin' Hits
(Capitol)

George Clinton has a habit of changing names (more successfully than Prince) to weasel out of record contracts — to Warners he was Funkadelic, to Polygram he was Parliament, and to Capitol he was George Clinton.

Somehow George has got tracks owned by most of the above record companies, recorded under most of the above names, and given them the once-over lightly remix treatment, and sold it to one of the above record labels. Clever, considering he also sold a new album to Sony this year, and gave Prince's Paisley Park two lemons earlier this decade.

But *Greatest Funkin' Hits* is a winner all the way, with Parliament grooves 'Flashlight' (guests Q-Tip, Busta Rhymes) and 'Mothership Connection' sounding better than ever. 'Bop Gun' with Ice Cube is here and George's great solo stuff from the 'Atomic Dog' period gets reshuffled.

Who else could walk out of McDonalds inspired by the phrase, 'Do Fries Go With That Shake', and then sell it to the world?

George should be appreciated (or arrested) for creating yet another P-Funk indulgence that the addicted have to own. And this collection is also a good intro to the mind of the master trickster of funk.

MURRAY CAMMICK

KORN

Life Is Peachy
(Epic)

Korn, eh? Bunch of adults still trying to come to terms with their schoolyard tormentors; recommend some Axl-Rose style therapy. Could get some songwriting mileage out of those hypnotherapy sessions. No? Oh, well. Seems a bit strange to claim to be 'underground' when your last album went Gold-going-on-Platinum, and that's in the States alone! Although Korn's heinously detuned sound is now claimed as inspiration by acts such as Sepultura (who even went so far as to use Korn producer Ross Robinson), the lyrics all concentrate on some ambiguous, overblown 'bad experience' buried in the past. Perhaps some people just aren't able to get over those humiliations and move on. I mean, Tool dwell on some pretty negative topics, but at least there's some redemption there, some light to escape the dark. But with Korn it's all about wallowing in the sick, depraved world, without the ability to see the good.

Musically, it's superb: meaty riffs so far down the guitars don't sound like guitars, and the rhythms are spot on. Even the vocals are cool, if you ignore the content. Sure, it's mighty agro and in yer face, but in an ugly, antagonistic, misguided way — like some nutter gatecrashing your twenty-first and killing all your friends. Know wot I mean?

GAVIN BERTRAM

MAKAVELI

the don illuminati the 7 day theory
(Death Row)

Tupac's alter ego Makaveli is loosely based around the Italian political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli, who believed in the theory of governing determinedly, and indifferently to moral considerations. Think about that for a while and you can see how it might start to relate to the hip-hop gangsta's mind-set. The album starts with an intro claiming several New York rappers (BIG, Nas, Mobb Deep) are involved in a conspiracy to assassinate

ate Makaveli. Tupac then mocks their challenge before several shotgun blasts open the album. Hence, subsequent events sound like one of the more sickening cases of life imitating art, and succinctly demonstrate the stupidity at the core of gangsta rap.

For all its political pretensions, *the seven day theory* is not a particularly engrossing album. The beats are fairly standard G-funk grooves, admittedly containing more drama and tension than most West Coast head nodders. Tupac was a talented young man with too much to prove and to much to live up to. Thug life will get you in the end.

ANDY PICKERING

NIRVANA

From the Muddy Banks
of the Wishkah
(Geffen)

Nirvana only played New Zealand once, by all accounts failing to prove the often bandied about 'greatest live band in the world' kinda rumours. Consequently, anyone who shelled out their hard-earned to witness that performance will be pleased to learn this album digs up those rumours and refines them as facts. It features performances of a veritable 'Best Of' spanning Nirvana's brief but brilliant existence, played like they knew there was no tomorrow.

The 'Intro' kicks things off in prophetic style, when some band mumbblings are blown to bits by the kind of scream usually saved for the point where a person goes off the deep end (I've heard the likes before, usually around the time people start running around with their pants down, or just as they do a swan dive from a mezzanine balcony at a gig). The smooth style changing of 'Aneurysm' makes it almost ass-kickingly close to everything a song ever needs to be, taking you round the world metaphorically (or literally, if you've seen the aptly patched together video version). All that's missing is the tender side of Kurt's vocals, for which you can turn to 'Heart-Shaped Box'.

Nirvana won't be touring this album, but consolations don't come much mightier than this. To all you kids who keep writing to us bemoaning Kurt's passing, write this in your letter to Santa and have a go at enjoying what Nirvana did leave you.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

MARILYN MANSON

Antichrist Superstar
(Interscope)

Antichrist Superstar represents the third coming of Mr Marilyn Manson and his partners in crime, this time with a concept album of sorts, designed to "bring about the apocalypse". While such an ambitious undertaking is almost certainly doomed to failure — surely the conservatives whose sensibilities they delight in offending are a lot closer to ushering in the end of the world than Marilyn Manson are ever likely to be — there's some good nasty fun along the way with a band who are to industrial what Mickey and Mallory are to serial killing.

Songs are divided into an unholy trinity of vaguely thematic 'cycles', and range from full-on industrial assaults to insipid new wave synth-pop. It's the straight ahead bilious hate fests that work best — '1996', 'Irresponsible Hate Anthem', 'Mr Superstar' — while the tracks with lower BPMs are often infected with a posey Bauhaus/Soft

Cell-type lethargy (don't miss the special guest appearance from the Devil on the hidden track, though).

Co-producer and godfather Trent Reznor gives the Nine Inch Nails treatment (aided by collaborations and contributions of various personnel from the NIN crew) to the rather patchy material, and with good results. But strip away this cool production, and what's left is standard B-grade metal riffery, twisted 80s dance beats, and hilariously facile lyrics. Nothing new or challenging here — but in this universe it's stance, not substance, that counts.

TROY FERGUSON

JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION

Now I Got Worry
(AUGOGO)

Just the other day a rad new disc came down the line to me. It was the new one from the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, *Now I Got Worry*, and boy, is it a smash. Those guys make me feel like a youngster again; a youngster who forgets about study and decides to get a rock 'n' roll band together for the purpose of playing them gun-loud, and gettin' them girls and drivin' them cars. In fact 'Identify' has all the hallmarks of those perfect three seconds of speed before you and the guys send Daddy's car into a lamp post. (This is not advocating dangerous driving, it's just reminding the kids how fun it is).

Don't fret, kids, listening to Rufus Thomas wailin' through 'Chicken Dog' will send enough hormones through you to get you past puberty in three minutes flat. And 'Can't Stop' (Booker T on morphine?) is sure to have you struttin' right. Yes, a fine disc indeed, one that should have all the grown-ups scratching their heads wondering where the kids have gone. The answer? Down to the practice room to sniff some bad stuff and treat a 10-mile radius to their Stooges impressions.

JESSE GARON

SUBLIME

Sublime
(MCA)

SUBLIME
Robbin' the Hood
(Liberation)

Drug overdoses sell records, it's a well known — if slightly depressing — fact of life. Going by that, Californian ska-punks Sublime should be rolling in it by now. All except their lead singer Brad Nowell, that is, who died of a heroin overdose in a hotel room last May.

Nowell was the driving force behind this hard drinking, good time band. The tracks which make up the posthumous release *Sublime* were layed down just prior to Nowell's death, so there's a slightly creepy feel to it all. To the punk set, this album may sound pretty lightweight, especially compared to the more full on ska-punk outlits. With Sublime it's a case of much more ska than punk, and on some songs they even introduce doses of hip-hop to their sound. Most of this album you could play to your mum without her reaching for the volume control, and it's not until about the seventh song that Sublime actually get noisy. It's the sort of album which could sound schizophrenic, but instead comes together nicely.

Slightly more suspect is the re-release of their debut album, 1994's *Robbin' the Hood*. It's actually a better album than *Sublime*, with a great mix

of crazy turntable action, outrageous samples, dub-inspired basslines and power riffs. It's wonderful that this album will now be available to a wider audience, but you still have to question the motives behind it's re-release. I'd think twice before playing this one to you mum, but that in itself hints at something good.

DOMINIC WAGHORN

WEEZER

Pinkerton
(Geffen)

Don't be frightened off by the swag of *Madam Butterfly* references that infiltrate this album from literally cover to cover; if this is a concept album, it's disguising it well. Weezer have not lost the penchant for infectiously catchy choruses that made their debut album so barber-shoppable, but have covered them in a lather of Brian Bell's bonafide R-O-C-K rock guitar, that's slammed into place by Pat Wilson's literally smashing drumming. It's a move they wear well enough to make themselves seem musically insipid in the fragile ballad department — consisting of 'Across the Sea' and 'Butterfly' — although Rivers Cuomo's lyrics manage to save the day even here.

Seriously loony first single 'El Scorcho' is the kind of anthem that can make a drunkenly retarded group's night (only to break it fist-bitingly in the morning after's replay). The irony of 'The Good Life' ensures its gripes will fit as easily into the life of any disgruntled nine-to-fiver as any rock 'n' roll-all-nighter. 'Falling for You' is what happens when the geek you once made the (for him) heartbreaking mistake of brushing past in the hallway drinks too much beer and blabs out his deepest feelings to you in a very public place, before hurling his guts on your shoes. If you're sensing an overriding theme here, it's party rockin' good times for all — particularly the fashionably challenged.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

VARIOUS

Sampler: A Fine Assortment of
Christchurch Bands
(RDU)

VARIOUS
Harder, Faster Baby!
(RDU)

There was a time not too long ago when friends would joke about everybody in Christchurch being in a band. Every week it seemed there was a new compilation coming out of Nightshift studios or Rob Mayes' Fallsafe label showcasing another 20 new 'acts'. Often these were composed of a core of like-minded musicians goofing off to tape. Of late, small compilations have become a rarity around the country. No longer is there a sense of community that drags relative unknowns together to combine forces (and finances) and release a product for interested punters (and believe me, they do exist). RDU, with their *Sheep Technique* show, have been doing just that for a while now this being their fifth and sixth efforts to expose the next Punkinhead/Loves Ugly Children for nationwide consumption.

Sampler sets down the pop/noise end, while *Harder, Faster Baby!* (obviously) gives us the punk/metal perspective. While neither compilation is going to set your world on fire, there are moments of interest. On *Sampler* these come in the shape of the Feelers' pounding guitar rhythms, the aural noise assaults of Barnard's Star, the