



Horsedreamer's Blues', that things take a step beyond being mostly melancholy for shut-the-blinds days, and invite you to think of someone else. Musically, it's joined on the prettier side of things by the likes of the delicate lonesome lullaby 'Goodnight Elisabeth', and the shimmeringly sparse 'Miller's Angels'. Still, it's the most untamed angsty tunes — in the shape of opening track 'Catapult', and the highly strung and stringed epic of 'I'm Not Sleeping' — that stand out the farthest.

Duritz has talked of people feeding off the pain of the tortured artist before, and of course he's absolutely right. Hence, when he ends the aforementioned 'Sleeping' by asserting, 'I'm goin' out that door,' the lonesome who've found solace in his solitude are sure to be hoping he doesn't stay gone too long.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

JOHN PARISH AND POLLY JEAN HARVEY

Dance Hall at Louse Point (Island)

On which a former 'collaborator' gets credit well due from the decade's gutsiest diva. Parish makes the music while Polly writes the words and some-glorious-how gets them out her throat without choking on the splintery bits.

John Parish likes to jangle, sometimes in an ambling, I got all day to accommodate these vocals, kinda way ('Girl'), and other times ('Dancehall at Louse Point') in that gorgeously messy way that makes you start throwing the cutlery draw around the kitchen in a vain attempt to achieve the same exhilarating effect.

While the extraordinarily stretching vocals on 'City of No Sun' are probably not the best introduction to

the uninitiated, there is plenty more here sure to hook a new clutch of devotees, and have even the most hardened Harvey fans feel like falling for her all over again. She's heart-breakingly Joni-ish when singing, 'Was she a pretty girl? / Does she have pretty hair?', on 'That Was My Veil'. Her unmasked take on 'Is That All There Is?', with broken fairground organ by Mick Harvey, will hit you right where Peggy Lee's did — giving the impression its narrator has just walked into the room and laid her life at your feet. The exhilarating new wavey wind-up of 'Um With Dead Flowers in a Drained Pool' and the truly threatening 'Taut' ('Jesus, save me's right, Peej!) are a pair worth paying the cover price twice for. By the time she's demanding to be taken one more time at album's end ('Lost Fun Zone'), the choice has long been taken out of your hands, and it's all your finger can do to hit play again.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

MAZZY STAR

Among My Swan (Capitol)

Well there's no 'Fade Into You', but then, it was unlikely we'd hear another majestic beauty like that in this lifetime. No real departure from their previous albums, still a very stoned Dinosaur Jr., with vocal goddess Hope Sandoval providing her world weary female J Mascis drawl — only it's not a drawl so much as a sigh that's caught some vocal chords on the way out.

When Bertolucci used 'Rhymes of an Hour' for Liv Tyler's love scene in *Stealing Beauty*, he couldn't have got it any more right — momentarily sensual power but eventually another forgotten milestone.

The album's similarity does breed

familiarity very quickly. Electric guitars that have travelled down many desert roads. Wax-covered acoustic guitars, gently reminding of the candle-lit loneliness when the power was cut off. It's all very romantic and I guess if you're not in the right red wine frame of mind (and my notes are drenched), you might not get into it. But if you have to listen to beautiful American, heartbroken, existential angst, then you could do a whole lot worse than 'Among My Swan' (whatever that means.)

JOHN TAITTE

THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT

It's Martini Time (Interscope)

I've said it before and I'll say it again, some album's should definitely last a day. Don't ask me how they should manage it, this is drunk logic after all, just take a swig of this concoction to see what I mean. The necessarily swingin' title track is the sort of excuse that can write a day off from the dawn end up if you play it too early, and if you can't handle the repercussions of that, you got no business listening to the Heat in the first place. Songs that put the rock back into rockabilly, most literally in the case of 'Rock This Joint', will pad out the day's package. And, mercifully, the perfect song to end such a day is also here, in the shape of 'Crooked Cigarette'.

'Generation Why' is proof these guys aren't entirely lost in the times when getting fucked-up in a bar was rightly seen as a class act, not just a poor show, as they throw down the gauntlet to every angst-ridden black T-shirt wearer you ever jostled clear of a juke box. Opening track 'Big Red Rocket of Love' is sure to be endearing to the ladies, if the band's stylin' threads on the back cover aren't enough. In case the pace leaves them a little giddy and breathless and wondering if they really should be doing this, the slinking grind of 'Slow' is up next to prove revving lust isn't the only thing on offer here. And just to prove you don't have to be Betty Page to inspire head Rev Jimbo Heath (just so long as you know it helps), an accidental trip to a gay bar has given rise to a fine country crooner about 'Interracial cowboy, homo kinda love' ('Cowboy Love'). You'd have to be beyond anal to pass this album up.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

KULA SHAKER

K (Columbia)

Pop's association with the mystical East goes about as far back as the Beatles' and Beach Boys' sojourns to meet that old faker, the Maharishi. Since then the odd sitar and George Harrison's genuine involvement in things Indian have been the main points of contact between the two twins. But now there's Kula Shaker.

Revolving around guru Crispian Mills, son of Haley, the band's karma

trappings look like another Britpop attempt at finding something novel from the already over plundered 60s. Epauletted shirts, Manfred Mann (Paul Jones) haircuts, and a Carnaby Street-styled montage for a record sleeve, all look like a 30-year-old past being re-dressed for a fresh generation.

Of course, all this is about as important as a sacred cow's butt if the music these four young middle class Englishmen are playing kicks a thousand shades out of the nearest mantra. And it doesn't.

Positive vibes first, and 'Tattva' could be renamed 'Jimmy' and it still be a damned fine psychedelica wig-out. 'Hey Dude' and 'Knight on the Town' give the album a double whammy entrance of real rock 'n' roll purpose, while 'Smart Dogs' reflects that they can shrewdly recycle Stone Roses influences. But the rest is merely pleasant, diverting, easily assimilated rock 'n' roll, with an Indian ambience and an aptitude for life affirming choruses. Latest single 'Govinda' is a nadir of post-hippie wetness and the Hendrix riffer and corny wordplay of 'Grateful When You're Dead' are too obvious signposts as to where they are coming from. The fact K went to Number 1 in the British charts like a joss-stick on a rocket is a testament to the undeniable charm of 'Tattva', and to the press's influence on a public too susceptible to anything new. Incense and peppermints, indeed.

GEORGE KAY

BABY BIRD

Ugly Beautiful (Festival)

If Ugly Beautiful was a film, it'd star Steve Buscimi and have concerned mothers up in arms. It's be a bit weird, a bit experimental, but it would ooze a kind of unintentional cool that you only find in newcomers.

But I guess the Stephen Jones story is too way out to ever get funding. Over a couple of years he recorded 400 tunes on his four track (sounds very Knoxian so far) as a cure for boredom and dole queue blues. Then last year he thought he'd start up his own record label and put out five albums in a year, each time growing in knowledge and developing in style. And now this, a studio album, with a real band — a debut of sorts, which sounds so refined and stylised you would've thought we'd been praising him for 10 years.

There's the sexy growl of Pulp's Jarvis Cocker, the melodic waverings of Ian McCulloch, and the smoothness of that geezer out of the Blue Nile (listen to 'Dead Bird Sings' and 'You and Me!'), all kind of bubbling away in a molten scream, like the demise of the shape-shifter baddie at the end of *Terminator 2*.

He sings of corner shops; and turns out a trippy, Doorsy dialogue about record company chart manipulation on the 10-minute 'King Bing' (and let's

hope they do for this). There song titles like 'Too Handsome to be Homeless', and mad larks like 'Atomic Soda' — which takes the Butthole Surfers' 'Hurdy Gurdy Man' gurgles and mixes them with walls from a Middle Eastern temple. And the out-and-out pop of the singles 'Goodnight' and 'You're Georgous', and the 'C-O-C-A C-O-L-A' chorus of '45 and Fat', are the twisted flip-sides to Jones' manic depressive genius. Phew, exceptional, eclectic stuff from the Twilight Parking Zone.

JOHN TAITTE

LES CLAYPOOL AND THE HOLY MACKEREL

Les Claypool and the Holy Mackerel presents Highball With the Devil (Prawn Song)

Woah, Les, you're one weird puppy. People used to say I was weird, but I ain't got nothing compared to you, ya freak. Still, I liked ya Primus stuff, except I never listened to it (hey, you try and find the right time to listen to Primus — not drugs, not booze, not happy, not sad, not lonely, not with pals). This is more of the same, but Les gets to indulge himself a bit more in his role as the greenest hoick to never come out of the mouth of American culture — but there's a lot to like in a hoick, just look at one under a microscope.

Okay, Lessy babe, watcha doing with a John Lennon thing going with 'Running the Gauntlet'? Or the 70s LA cruise of 'Holy Mackerel'? Ya wanna be Dick Dale with 'Hendershot'? Ya wanna be a bit more careful playing with Henry Rollins on 'Delicate Tendrils'.

Yep, Les gets about, but he's always carrying that trusty bass, making those funny twangy noises I thought were only there for novelty value for the first three albums. But this time he also plays a few other things (which he ain't as good at), and gets to do a bit of jazz stuff (they all end up doing that — it's kinda like benefit gigs and rehab). Whether this is a good or bad album is

up to you. If you like Les you like him, if you don't you don't; but don't try and force yourself — it'll drive you bonkers.

JESSE GARON

LITTLE AXE

Slow Fuse (M&G)

Little Axe; legendary guitarist Skip McDonald's nickname, and also the name of his blues-inspired band, whose personnel include the equally revered rhythm section of Doug Wimbish and Keith LeBlanc and the production skills of On U Soundman Adrian Sherwood. After the critically acclaimed debut *The Wolf That House Built*, it was reasonable to expect great things from *Slow Fuse*, but I must confess to having been a little disappointed. However, to fully appreciate this album you pretty much have to forget their previous effort and approach it with an open mind.

There's nothing on *Slow Fuse* to match the peaks of *Wolf* — the pure sliding groove of 'Ride On' or the unfeasibly funk-ed-up bassline on 'Daytona'. It is obvious McDonald and co. have gone in search of an altogether different feel this time, in their quest to create "blues for the twenty-first century". The mood is generally lighter, with vocals taking a more prominent role, sometimes sounding almost choral, as on the first single 'Storm is Rising'. Pick of the bunch is 'Too Late', which is both soothing and melancholic — perfect at about 6AM or after you've had a fight with the missus.

As with all things On U, the production is smooth, although there's no way co-producers Sherwood and McDonald are breaking any new creative ground for themselves in this department. Not bad as far as an easy listening album goes, but, given the considerable talents involved, I'd be alarmed if the music they make got any easier.

DAVID HOLMES



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