

Band — their evolutionary path has occasionally intersected with others, but this relentless sonic bulldozer has no need for allies: the search and destroy mission grinds ahead with little regard for external developmental trends.

TROY FERGUSON

**VERUCA SALT**

**Eight Arms to Hold You (Outpost)**

Veruca Salt's critically acclaimed debut album, *American Thighs*, contained a smattering of pedal-to-the-metal rockers. But on *Eight Arms to Hold You* the band have dispensed with their former indie-rock trappings to create a V8-powered rock monster. In the best traditions of Spinal Tap, Veruca Salt have cranked their amps all the way up to 11 and let things ROCK. That's R-O-C-K, as in, "Are you ready to ROCK!" OK, so it's one thing to act like rock stars, but it's another thing entirely to pull it off with the conviction and panache Veruca Salt bring to *Eight Arms to Hold You*. The album is simply overflowing with the top-drawer songwriting of Nina Gordon and Louise Post. Melodies fly like sparks from each track, and a dynamic joie de vivre reverberates throughout the album.

'Awesome' is just that, while the glam homage of 'With David Bowie' (replete with Ziggy's, 'You betcha!', catch cry) will have you reaching for your old Mott the Hoople vinyl, a nostalgic tear welling in your eye. 'Volcano Girls' name-checks their breakthrough single 'Seether', with Nina Gordon confessing in a revelatory moment, 'The seether is Louise.' 'Earthcrossers' closes the album — a weary tale of groupies, life and love on the road, it's a fitting finale to an album that rarely puts a foot wrong. For a band with Veruca Salt's well-established indie-cred, *Eight Arms to Hold You* represents a bold move and is perhaps something of a gamble. However, when rockist moves are played this convincingly, it's hard not to be won over by their nefarious charms.

MARTIN BELL

**THE OFFSPRING**

**Ixnay on the Hombre (Columbia)**

It should be easy to charge the Offspring with 'sell-out' and leave it at that, now they've made the move to a major for gazillions of bucks and put out a record that won't sound out of place on modern rock radio — and



which will probably be bought by the kind of people you hate. But it isn't that simple of course — *Smash* already did the crossover thing on an independent, and while *Ixnay on the Hombre* is less compromised than you'd expect, it does expose the stadium leanings you may have suspected for some time.

Sure, 'The Meaning of Life', 'Change the World', and 'Mota' still burn with a kind of bodacious dude Cali-punk energy, but most of this album is different territory — big rock guitars, soaring vocal melodies, and a Dave Jerden production so vast it could flatten those invading ships in *ID4*. This sort of makes it punk rock without the punk — the Offspring identity is discernible, but it lacks attitude and punk; and it's a particularly 'rock' Offspring that approaches the epic histrionics of cuts like 'Gone Away' and 'Amazed'.

Still, there's a positive feel to the album (which is book-ended by mildly amusing spoken pieces by Biafra and Calvert DeForest), and the lyrics don't indicate a shift of motives as to why the band do what they do, but it's difficult to ignore the feeling something's not right. Though a major label deal doesn't necessarily indicate sell-out, it's worth remembering the old SST slogan — 'Friends Don't Let Friends Listen to Corporate Rock'. You decide.

TROY FERGUSON

**PAT BOONE**

**No More Mr Nice Guy — In a Metal Mood (Hip-O/MCA)**

This is what Tony Bennett should have done for his comeback: cheesy rock songs with a fabulous, lush Los Angeles orchestra, top arrangers,

acoustic bass, a swinging drummer and fabulous warm, real brass. It's better than all those retro, limp lounge compilations. Pat croons while the band positively swings (and jams) its way through 'It's A Long Way to the Top (If You Want to Rock and Roll)' (sublime), 'Enter Sandman' (second best), 'Panama', 'Paradise City', 'Stairway to Heaven', 'No More Mr Nice Guy', 'Smoke on the Water' (arranged by Tom Scott) and 'The Wind Cries Mary'. Lots of brass and woodwind solos make this a big band treat. The only thing that could kill this album is what he's wearing: Pat shouldn't be wearing leather, this groove demands a silver satin suit with tapered trousers and a touch of Brylcreem. I didn't expect to like it, I love it.

MURRAY CAMMICK

**FUTURE STUPID**

**Cannon Fodder (Felix)**

Clocking in at just over 30 minutes long, Auckland three-piece Future Stupid's debut album *Cannon Fodder* is a short but very sweet testament to the beauty of noise. A distinct New Zealand flavour prevails, with any imported influences buried deep in the swamp of sonic mayhem. The guitars sound as big as Shihad's ever have, and in places there are certainly shades of *Churn*. But it's the whole sound, rather than single instruments, that really impresses. Constructed at Ground Zero with a small budget, *Cannon Fodder* truly has a sound as huge as any overseas heavy/industrial/noise act could hope for. This is particularly evident on the slower, dramatic 'Dead Air', the hyper 'Chomp', and the Mig 19 remix of 'Shit Biscuit', surely the album's high-

light. With it's super cool yet simple riff, hip-hop rhythm, processed spoken vocals, and some wicked samples, 'Shit Biscuit' is a raging rock beast, demanding attention. Oh, and the *Space Invaders* album cover deserves a mention too. Bring the noise.

GAVIN BERTRAM

**SILVERCHAIR**

**Freak Show (Murmur)**

It must be either a dream come true or a total nightmare to be a teenage rock star, selling millions of albums and playing sold-out shows to screaming fans all over the planet, but having no time to get up to regular teenage hi-jinks as your parents are always on tour keeping you on the straight and narrow. Even worse when you decide to do a dark and moody album addressing heavy subject matter that you have absolutely no experience of whatsoever because of the constant presence of chaperones.

This is an unconvincing effort from

perhaps the invisible hand of the market directed the string section in 'Cemetery'. If there had never been a Nirvana, maybe Silverchair would have gone on to become panelbeaters or brain surgeons, or perhaps would lead a fulfilling life drinking VB and surfing the Newcastle breaks. But instead, here they are plagiarising the entire Seattle back catalogue, and doing it for the kids who missed out on seeing Nirvana first-hand. Of course, Australia has a great tradition of tribute bands that apparently do a roaring trade, so if Silverchair's career fizzles out they'll have another chance before exploring other options.

TROY FERGUSON

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**

**Superfunk: The Funkiest Album in the World... Ever! (EMI/Virgin)**

*Superfunk* brings back memories of lying in front of the television watching *Ready To Roll*, at a time when the only three songs in my life that meant anything to me were 'Brick House' by the Commodores, 'Stomp' by the

six-minute live version of James Brown's 'Sex Machine', recorded at Studio 54. The goods in the middle range from the more primal funk of Sly & the Family Stone and Funkadelic, to party tracks from Earth, Wind & Fire, and Chic, to the disco hits of LaBelle, Rose Royce, and Wild Cherry. *Superfunk* has all the mainstream hits you'd expect from a compilation with such an overblown title, although someone involved knew their funk history, 'cause there's phenomenal lesser-known tracks by Rufus & Chaka Khan, the Isley Brothers, and Brass Construction, here also. Naturally, there's some pure crap on offer (Diesel, anyone?), but that's why programmable CD players were invented.

There's bound to be one lost soul out there who'd have preferred Peter Andre's version of 'Let's Groove' to be included; otherwise, if you know your Stones from your Stallones, *Superfunk* (with the odd exception) is guaranteed to take you higher.

JOHN RUSSELL



the lads. There are some OK metal riffs happening in their 'hard out' numbers, but it seems second-hand and soulless. ('Lie to Me' is 'Tourette's' without the cursing, and 'Freak' is a marriage of 'Stay Away' and 'Heart-Shaped Box'.) Even they don't seem keen to play the ballads —

Brothers Johnson, and George Benson's 'Give Me the Night'. Curiously, George ain't featured on *Superfunk*, but there's a whole stack of awesome tracks here anyway: 39 in total, spread over two CDs.

*Superfunk* opens with Cameo's 'Word Up', and winds up with the storming

**ARCHIVE**

**Londinium (Island)**

If you've ever liked Massive Attack, Portishead or Tricky, put down this magazine, go to your local CD store, and buy this album.

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