



Alice Cooper

**ALICE COOPER**  
**The Beast Of Alice Cooper**  
(Warner Brothers)

A lot of my formative years were spent listening to Alice records. Both *The Killer* and *Million Dollar Babies* are rock classics, and you can still hear echoes of Alice in a lot of the new metal. It's his style and attitude that keeps him important. Like, as teen anthems go, nothing much beats 'I'm Eighteen' — it's got everything. He gets a bit obvious in 'School's Out', but no less effective.

This collection is almost the same as the old Best Of collection, but in a much more attractive package, inner sleeve and all. It could possibly lose 'Desperado' and 'Is It My Body', and gain 'Sick Things', 'Killer' and 'Love It To Death'. But it's great to hear teenage lament circa 1974 again, and I forgot how good 'Muscle Of Love' is.

KERRY BUCHANAN

**TAMA**  
**Workshop**  
(Te Aroha)

I'm familiar with the hassles and frustrations local guitar virtuoso Tama Renata endured to finally see his debut album release. Five years in the making, progress limited by budget and with record company interest non-existent, last year Aly Cook came to the rescue and, together with Tama and engineer Reid Snell, former Te Aroha Records. Good on ya, Aly! You too, Tama. Well-known and acclaimed on the Auckland scene for 20 years, Tama Renata finally makes vinyl!

Inevitably, given the circumstances and Tama's diverse musical influences, *Workshop* suffers a little through lack of focus and a somewhat dated approach. So we get a variety of feels; Polynesian, reggae, funk, jazz, rock — but how. Make no mistake, Tama

Renata is one hot guitarist. Good singer, too.

With all but one track self-composed (Danny Wilson's 'In The Ghetto') *Workshop* displays a much underrated New Zealand talent. Not without its faults, it's a worthy debut.

JOHN DIX

**BABYFACE**  
**Tender Lover**  
(Solar)

Babyface is probably best known to you pop kids as half of LA Reid and Babyface, remixers to the stars. He has had quite a career prior to this, however, from his days with the Deele and supplying hits to the Solar stable, up until his more recent successes hitmaking for the likes of Bobby Brown, Pebbles, Karyn White and others. Now he's got a solo album out so that he can prove beyond a doubt that he's a talented guy.

*Tender Lover* is very much your cool modern soul album. He's on the cover dressed badly and looking pouty with rumpled beds in the background, and it has a funky side and a slow side. The funky side is pretty good; youngbloods Troop and After 7 help out with some real nice dancefloor stuff, particularly the title track and 'Can't Stop My Heart'. Things really get going with the smoochy ballad side though, and being a romantic sort of guy I appreciate this genre.

Unsurprisingly, there's a smooth, rich Solar sound to all this, complete with whispered intros and anguished, impassioned vocals. 'Whip Appeal' (not an S&M ballad, unfortunately), 'Sunshine', 'Given A Chance' — it's all wonderful and heartrending, and it's great to hear that classic LA sound still works. I suppose this means that Babyface is now really rich.

KIRK GEE

**VARIOUS ARTISTS**  
**Stairway To Heaven / Highway To Hell**  
(Polygram)

When this bunch of metal and pop rockers got together to perform at the Moscow Peace Festival in August '89 they decided to also donate their performances to make this record. Each track is a cover version of a song originally recorded by an artist who has suffered from drug or alcohol abuse, and the choice of material is great.

Ozzy particularly cooks on his smokin' rendition of 'Purple Haze' with Zakk Wylde burnin' so hot on guitar that

Hendrix is sure to have approved. Motley Crue slide through a fairly decent tribute to Tommy Bolin in the form of 'Teaser' and the Scorpions do likewise for Keith Moon with 'I Can't Explain'. Also included are Bon Jovi playing Thin Lizzy's 'The Boys Are Back In Town', Skid Row doing the Pistols' 'Holidays In The Sun', Cinderella with a worthy version of 'Move Over' (Janis Joplin) and Jason Bonham having a good shot at doing his dad's 'Moby Dick'.

To finish off there's the loose rock n' roll jam that closed the Russian festival. Profits from this project will go to MADF (is that 'Make A Difference Foundation' or 'Mad Fuckers'?) to help prevent drug and alcohol abuse amongst today's youth.

GEOFF DUNN

**BAD BRAINS**  
**Quickness**  
(Caroline)

One of the great racial anomalies of rock music is the "black guys can't rock" myth. It's okay for white guys to be funky (especially if they're really bad at it, and English) but the upper echelons of the music world just cannot cope with black guys rocking. This is quite strange because not only did blacks create the foundation upon which rock n' roll is built, but most of the great guitar innovators were blacks — King, Berry, Hendrix, Hazell.

Attitudes, though, are starting to change. The likes of Living Colour and Fishbone are breaking into the charts, so maybe now is the time for the great black rockers, Bad Brains, to emerge from the underground. *Quickness*, their fourth album, is the first to be released locally in NZ. It remains very much in the Brains' musical hardcore territory. They use the traditional buzzsaw guitar sound, but it's tempered by the band's funk / reggae roots, which adds an interesting edge. Earl's drumming could easily be sampled from some hard funk act, while HR's vocals are sort of aggro-Rasta, with a reggae feel.

But it's the hardcore sound which they really excel at. There's no OTT speed for speed's sake, yet no punches are pulled. 'Soulcraft' is truly heavy, dangerous stuff while at the other end of the scale 'You' Juice' is funky metal, the sort of stuff that Living Colour have adopted. It all flows well together. As the Bad Brains themselves say, "with the quickness children will lead the way." It would do the charts a world of good.

KIRK GEE

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