

Albums

needed as accompaniment when you've got a voice of this emotional calibre. Serenity with an edge. DONNA YUZWALK

CELEBRATE SONIC ARTS Ima Hitt Records (Hitt Me)

Another compilation from New Plymouth's Ima Hitt label, twelve songs by twelve bands from various corners of the noisy north.

Electric Church start with 'Bring It Back Up', soulful crooning from Jessica and a pained guitar you wouldn't want to argue with; Waxxo Ghoti, 'Adder', doomy words over scooter-riding music from the politik capital; Pieces of Cod, 'Amphetamine', could have been recorded at a party in *Quadrophenia* complete with party ambience; S.P.U.D., 'Herash', siren guitars burnout over a tinny megaphoned voice; Onaweta, 'Persecutor Baby', Merlene tells of a woman who consumes everything she can get; Skank Attack, 'Limbs Akimbo', live recordings always kill the live atmosphere; The Warners 'Josephine', well-honed stadium rocker without any jaggys left; Johnny Lead Fingers and Phantom Rockers from Hell 'Twisted Mental', living up to the name — is there any more of this noise available?; Flesh D-Vice, 'Legend of Lugos', B-Movie kings of Capital hardcore; Harry Death 'Roundman',

hard comic-core; Bygone Era, 'What Did You Say?', good clean recording, much rehearsal evident; Number Nine, 'Swan Song', jangly melodic rocker that could have been their last before they became new faces in dreamy hell. So if you always wondered what all these bands sounded like grab this well produced collection from your local record store, Real Groovy or Ima Hitt, PO Box 407, New Plymouth. KOWALSKI



Gary Moore with Albert King.

Norman Cook has taken some chances in his time. He used to be a Housemartin, then he completely fooled everybody and started making dance music and he does it exceptionally well. *Let Them Eat Bingo* is undeniably just another pop album but it's a real good one. Norman goes in boots and all. He throws samples everywhere, there's big crunchy beats and hummable melodies, it's all out funky fun. The man definitely has a good ear for a tune. He covers (or reinterprets) some nice tracks from the Fats Domino / Bobby Charles R&B chestnut 'Before I Grow Old' through to the Clash / S.O.S. Band blend of 'Dub Be Good To Me'. Norman throws in a few goodies of his own, too, like the pleasant funk of 'Won't Tell About It' or the Afro / Hip-Hop of 'Tribute To King Tubby'. Add to this surprisingly strong vocals from Lindy and Lester and you have the most vinyl fun I've seen in a long while. Play it loud. KIRK GEE

BEATS INTERNATIONAL Let Them Eat Bingo (London)

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THE FALL Extricate (Polygram)

It's fitting that the first year of a new decade should herald the creative re-birth of the Fall over the course of a fifteen album career. The portents for the Fall's major label debut were not good, however: Smith's split with wife Brix, the death of his father and a serious car accident. And the last few Fall albums have been listless, ramshackle affairs: Smith on autopilot or lapsing into ragged self-parody. *Extricate* employs the varied talents of Coldcut, Adrian Sherwood and ex-Blondie producer Craig Leon. Smith's trademark snarl has been smoothed around the edges but lyrically it's still as obtuse as hell. There

appear to be numerous veiled references to the singer's recent emotional dilemmas but *Extricate* is a welcome return to form and bodes well for the Fall's continuing potency. Rave on Mark E. Smith. GARTH SEER

GARY MOORE Still Got the Blues (Virgin)

A true return to Gary Moore's roots which began in the blues with a band called Skid Row (probably before S.Bach was born). Guests on the album include Albert King (on a reel-in version of 'Oh Pretty Woman'), Albert Collins, Brian Downey of Thin Lizzy and Nicky Hopkins. George Harrison co-writes and plays on 'That Kind of Woman', one of three tracks which are on CD and tape only, yet are crucial to the LP's continuity.

All styles of pure blues are well represented but Gary's speciality has to be the slow, heart-wrenching numbers like the title track which sounds similar to the monumental 'Parisienne Walkways'. This is a very good album which will appeal to rock and blues fans alike. GEOFF DUNN

THE SMITHEREENS 11 (Liberation)

Taking their album title from Sinatra's *Ocean's 11* movie proves that the Smithereens are nothing if not cryptic muthas. Who gives a finkers cuss about a Sinatra movie — he should've stuck to singing and maybe after 11 the Smithereens should take up acting.

After the sparky sixties plagiarism of *Green Thoughts*, I was hoping for the same but singer/guitarist/writer Pat DiNizio decided that he wanted the band to sound like AC/DC meets the Beatles. Wanting to sound like the Fab Four is one of the finest ambitions a band can have and on the best songs here like 'Girl Like You' and 'William Wilson' there's hints of McCartney influence.

But elsewhere the leaden guitar crunch shackles the songs when it should be driving them. Ed (Ramoness, Living Colour) Stasium produced and he has to share the blame for trying to turn this little band of New Jersey pop fans into another small time outfit of stadium rockers. GEORGE KAY

TASHAN On the Horizon (Def Jam)

It's been four years since Tashan last hit the public consciousness although it seems more like a decade. Back then he was one of Def Jam's great soul hopes (along with Chuck Stanley and Oran 'Juice' Jones) and with his truly incredible single 'Chasin' A Dream' he seemed the most likely to succeed.

Four years on it looks like he's done it. Russell Simmons and the crew have provided both elegant hip-hop beats and some classic slinky soul, all ideal for Tashan's vocals. He hasn't lost any of his Marvin Gaye style smoothness. If anything, he's developed more control. The voice just floats effortlessly around the beats coming extremely close to perfection on tracks like 'Black Man'. And the ballads? Well, what can you say. I've always been a big sucker for the classic soul ballad and Tashan definitely makes the grade, especially on the soaring duet with label-mate Alyson Williams. Basically, *On the Horizon* is just plain wonderful. KIRK GEE

COWBOY JUNKIES The Caution Horses (BMG)

The Cowboy Junkies first album seemed to be at odds with just about everything else in the market place. A mere whisper of an album, its confessional air seemed intent on renouncing all that is bright and bouncy in our glib pop world.

The Canadian outfit's second album sees the sound fleshed out with fiddle and pedal steel guitar. But while not nearly as stark as the *Trinity* sessions, the overall mood is still decidedly downbeat. 'Sun Comes Up It's Tuesday Morning' is the archetypal *my baby's gone and I feel so bad* number. 'Witches' is one track that harks back to the nakedness of the debut, a windswept vista of longing and lust.

Fellow Canadian odd-balls Neil Young and Mary-Margaret O'Hara get covered ('Powderfinger' is transformed into a languid lament while 'You Will Be Loved Again' emerges with hymn-like potency). But Michael Timmins' songs continue to espouse a melancholic world view and that there's nobility to be found in emotional chaos. GARTH SEER

SLY AND ROBBIE Silent Assassin (Island)

Sly and Robbie have progressed from being reggae studio wizards to being all round musical wizards. They've now decided to apply themselves to hip hop with the help of a few old guns like producer / rapper KRS-1 from Boogie Down Productions and a batch of rappers. Most of the vocal talent comes through. Young MC is not his usual rapid fire self but he delivers 'Under Arrest' with real power. Queen Latifah is also in classic form and Willie D unleashes two of the best tracks on the album. Unfortunately that's where it ends. On the whole the production is rather flat. Sly and Robbie are their usual wickedly funky selves but KRS-1's empty style doesn't really allow the talents involved here to cut loose. *Silent Assassin* lifts but it doesn't soar. KIRK GEE

BASIA London Warsaw New York (Epic)

Basia used to sing for the bossanova-obsessed Matt Bianco, the toast of maitre'd's the world over. Her first solo album *Time And Tide* squeezed out surprising juice with 'Miles Away', 'New Day' and the title track. Earnest and professional, it warranted a closer look. Honest it did.

Basia hasn't broadened her oeuvre for the second LP, although she has grown her hair, and there is less of the budget urgency that made *Time And Tide* a guilty addition to many a record collection. Good news for restaurateurs, though: *London Warsaw New York* still pumps out the trademark Bianco beats. Bianco pens the songs with Danny White, who gets a shifty back cover. Both speak the esperanto of good times, although 'Cruising For Bruising', 'Best Friends' and a neat cover of 'Until You Come Back To Me' rise above the unflinching optimism.

Basia has a voice that can take the roof off, so it would be wrong to criticise her for being in a good mood — especially in a year when REM and the B-52s both sound the same. Basia's first LP hinted that she might be breaking away, but I guess she went back to the party. CHAD TAYLOR

SINEAD O'CONNOR I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got (Chrysalis)

As everyone knows by now this is the album that spawned the Number One single in thirteen countries ('Nothing Compares 2 U') and shot Sinéad to the top spot in the US album charts. How very Zen that untold fame and fortune should be won by someone whose whole trip is based on a rejection of such hollow worldly trophies.

This album reverberates with the subdued intensity of the person newly at peace with herself. As the album dedication notes, "All I ever needed was inside me". Gone is the polly-pod emotional texture and bleating, accusatory tone that corroded the charm of *The Lion and the Cobra*.

Now Sinéad is spiritually tuned up and singing about things you'd never let slip in mixed company (insecurity, self-doubt, anxiety, finding yourself) let alone write a pop song about. But Sinéad makes poetry out of fag-end feelings.

Sinéad also proves that a few plangent guitar chords are all that's

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