nz singles

DRIBBLING DARTS OF LOVE (Flying Nun)

The debut EP from the three-piece Dribbling Darts of Love: five songs, small but near-perfectly formed, sort of folk music with teeth. Matthew Bannister on guitar, Alan Gregg on bass and Alice Bulmer on violin. No drums, but with Matthew's vocals mixed to the fore, the lead Dribbler's startling lyrical insights work like a fourth

Here they weave a sparkling mesh of jaunty rhythms and biting insights, over-scored with Alice's sweet and lively violin — definitely the icing on the rich and occasionally heavy lyrical cake baked by M. Bannister. Sometimes his clever insights can be a little bit too intrusive, especially when the musical flurry begs you to kick up your heels and dance (a jig?). His songs glimmer with delicate keyboard and rhythm embellishments — a dash of congo here, a brief guitar riff there although any album that credits a tambourine machine is bound to be more about rhythm and roll than rock.
Polished and finely crafted, the

listener is torn between enjoying the artfully simple melodies or the words. As in 'Love and Friendship': Love and friendship, I'm trying to understand/But I am a stranger in a strange land/You have your customs, you take me by the hand/I'm going to get in trouble if I stay as I am. We look forward to hearing the next installment. DONNA YUZWALK

RENDERERS **Bigger Than Texas** (Flying Nun)

This song flickers delicate as a candle flame, a ghost of a country and western song, a mysterious emanation from the outer limits of a genre. Although the Renderers hail from Christchurch, Maryrose Crook sings with an authentic American hick glitch in her voice, her words underscored by the merest breath of guitar, elusive as a train whistle dying on the breeze.

Eery and exquisite, a visitation from planet Country.

STRANGELOVES Turn Your Lights On (Flying Nun)

Something about one of the guitar lines hints at Throw Your Arms Around Me' only on a much more modest, Dunedin scale. A winsome, touching jingle-jangle guitar riff wrapped around fetching lyrical imagery Baby's got a black dress, she wears it every day/it's not a colour that I like but I

never say. References to Galway Bay and whiskey anchor this song firmly in the southern school of pop angst, and it's no less charming for that. DONNA YUZWALK

singles

Beast (Factory EP)

Ms Carroll, ex NME, ex Miaow, is one Mancunian who wouldn't be seen embalmed in nouveau flares. In fact, everything about her is the complete opposite of the limp, laddish hedonism proposed by the Northsides and (aptly named) Charlatans of the world. Admittedly the first song on this EP is a misguided attempt at Hispanic disco, but the other two are unhealthily seductive. 'Beast On The Streets' has silvery vocals, exquisite electronic dynamics and a disturbing pervo-cop story, while 'Train You're On' begs the use of the hideous cliche "trance dance" with its religious chanting, unfathomable samba rhythms and heart-stopping down tuned guitars played by Carroll's husband, ex-Big Black genius Santiago Durango. MAITHEW HYLAND

RAIN TREE CROW Black Water (Virgin) 12"

This is the same band lineup that recorded as Japan for the Tin Drum album, reunited but with a new name to signpost a change in direction (although in the decade they've been away they could have come up with something that wasn't an anagram for WE R CRETIN AOR). The single takes up where Sylvian's *Brilliant Trees* and *Gone To Earth* left off; colourful and romantic landscapes tidily packaged as pop songs. It's what they do best, and with everyone listening to Angelo Badalamenti they've got a whole new audience. Nice stuff. CHAD TAYLOR

MY BLOODY VALENTINE Tremolo (Creation EP) SLOWDIVE Morningrise (Creation EP)

Why the most inimitable band in the world have spawned the most imitators since the Velvet Underground (or perhaps the Sex Pistols, or the Smiths, or the Jesus and Mary Chain) is one of life's little mysteries.

My Bloody Valentine's only answer is to keep on making noises that no-one else could have imagined, let alone produced. Despite everything we're

supposed to expect it's a kind of modernist progression: they're taking their gorgeous delirium further and further and getting less and less describable as they go.

As for the imitators, until now they've fallen into two categories: the hopelessly second rate (Telescopes, Ride) and those whose records are impossible to obtain (Bark Psychosis, Chapterhouse, the Whipping Boy). It may come as a surprise, then, that Slowdive are really, really good. The guitars get as close to Valentine pitch as anyone has thus far (ie about two years behind) and Slowdive add the most distant, mournful synths you've never heard. It's not a fluke either: their eponymous debut EP was, if anything, even more spectral.

MATTHEW HYLAND

SCRITTI/SHABBA She's A Woman (Virgin) 12"/CD Single

Yep, it's Shabba Ranks, the ultimate ruler of the current reggae dancehall/DJ scene, a household name all over the world, except here go figure it. This man has a voice that can stop a herd of marauding big wheel trucks. Teaming up with Scritti Politti on this old Beatles thing, three mixes, with the William Orbit mix doing the damage. Check out Shabba's own work for further pleasure.

3am Eternal (Liberation) 12"

It amazed me that 'What Time Is Love' didn't do the big biz it did overseas, such a hot song. Anyhow, here's part two of the K.L.F. game plan, smoothed out hip house with catchy chorus and monster drum beats. These boys are true renaissance figures, call them 'Justified Ancients of Mu Mu', the Timelords' or this moniker, it still spells genius. Samplekings who on this one sample themselves from the ambient 'Chill Out' work, and parts of 'The White Room'. It's a hot one.

JULEE CRUISE Rockin' Back Inside Your Heart (Warner Bros) 7"

A fifties homage from Angelo Badalamenti and Ms Cruise coming on like a new age Patti Page (go ask your parents) to cool effect. My personal fave from the album, which is of course de riguer to play at any dinner party, good for the digestion. Anyway, I like it when the horn line goes all wacky.

RALPH TRESVANT Stone Cold Gentleman (MCA) Cassingle

Graduate of the New Edition school of lead singers, and with 'Sensitivity' hit a nerve. This is more mainstream

swingbeat, but not unpleasant, and what a nice idea for a song. This guy just wants to open doors for his young lady, buy flowers and stuff. Oh yes Bobby Brown appears as well, I bet he's a nice guy too.

TOM JONES Couldn't Say Goodbye (EMI) Cassingle

Tom comes from an earlier age of opening and closing doors for ladies, and he's on emotive form for this sad opus. The other track is called 'Zip It Up', where Tom gets funky. All joking aside, he's one of the last of the great white swingers, and I tell you, there ain't many of them left.

SHEILA E Sex Cymbal (Warner Bros) 12"

'Would you still love me, if I didn't have a dime?' Yeah, sure would Ms E, I like songs about drumming women. Still the same sound, but slightly brought up to date with the rap and all. Great percussion break in the middle livens things up no end. One of the better tracks off a slightly disappointing new

ZZ TOP My Head's In Mississippi (Warner Bros) Cassingle

The N.M.E. reviewed this by saying ZZ Top's head is up its arse, hell I wouldn't say that about these three Texan boys. Jesus, I remember at their concert, walking into some guy pushing my sauce soaked hot dog into his nose, lucky I was tired and emotional and didn't feel his fist too much. Anyhow, I like this song, and I really like that the N.M.E. doesn't, bunch of elitest dick heads that they are.

JANE'S ADDICTION **Been Caught Stealing** (Warner Bros) 12"

I liked the song when I saw the video and I think it's shit without the images, but that's one of the horrors of modern life, isn't it. Worth obtaining for the previously unreleased 'LA Medley' of the Doors' 'LA Woman', X's 'Nausea' and the Germs' 'Lexicon Devil'.

Hangar 18 (Capitol) 12"

Back stage at the Megadeth concert, the boys wouldn't allow anyone to drink alcohol, they just kicked back the sushi and mineral water. A sensible approach to modern living. So they tell me.

The one's about freezing bodies for later use and works better on the live version, plus live covers 'The Conjuring' and 'Hook In Mouth' plus, and it's a big plus, a cut out mask of Vic Rattlehead!!! **DAVID LEE ROTH** Sensible Shoes (Warner Bros) Cassingle

I don't quite understand Mr DL Roth's reasoning behind this tale of lsot love. Oh, wait a minute, he's being metaphoric like if he changes his lifestyle or something he'll get the girl. It's the Rothman in a blues mode, and it sounds okay to me, check out those high heeled leather thigh boots on the cover, art fans.

2 IN A ROOM She Got Me Going Crazy (Liberation) 12"

Good god, Todd Terry had a hand in this house ditty about loose booty. Todd hasn't worked for a while, but his style hasn't changed much, maybe a bit more on the pop side of things. The Todd bass mix (you're choice of five) is by far the best. There's something about sex on the dancefloor songs that always makes me like them, like a healthy approach to life.

ALEXANDER O'NEAL All True Man (Epic) Cassingle

You need a man to go to work!!' Big Alex paints a picture of modern man, sensitive but hard with it, he sings like it. Classic soul ballad style with a great Jam and Lewis understated rhythm cooking underneath it. First two mixes are ideal, the two house versions destroy all the feel, it's a pity, you shouldn't deform such a great song. KERRY BUCHANAN

BAND Powerstation, March 28.

Queen Ida probably wouldn't be my choice of an excellent Zydeco night out. Let's face it, her recorded output pretty much sucks. Still, Zydeco is really meant to be experienced live, so I dutifully trotted off to the Powerstation not expecting a lot. Fortunately, once there I found I was wrong, and in a big

The Bon Temps Band filled the criteria for Zydeco musicians (as established by Buckwheat Zydeco) in that they looked terrible — bad suits, an accountant on bass and someone's relative (Ida's son, in this case) — but sounded great, playing a solid set that leaned heavily towards an R'n'B sound rather than the more traditional Zydeco feel. They managed to cover Yakety Yak' so it fell somewhere between the two styles, sung in French

with accordion solos but still with a heavy R'n'B beat. It was sort of weird sounding but brilliant at the same time.

Ida was brilliant too, an awesomely powerful voice, some cool accordion playing, and one heap of energy for a grandmother she ripped! The only down on the whole show was the (mercifully) brief set by her son. He was fine until he sang. This aside, it was a great show. Self-appointed purists can sneer, but Queen Ida had a whole bunch of people who obviously hadn't danced in a long while up and shakin' it and that's what counts. KIRK GEE

SOMBRETONES TALL DWARFS, CHRIS KNOX Gluepot, Friday, April 5.

Arrived late to see Chris Knox performing sonic doodles on guitar (strings kept breaking) and funny little tiny organ thing on a stand. He tossed off a few priceless songs, as ever, and cracked-wise to the home crowd.

Then Alec Bathgate, who had been

waiting tall and serious in the wings, got on stage with Chris under the Tall Dwarfs banner and they gradually let rip under reverberating lavender and green backlighting. People come up and tell you what a great guitarist Alec Bathgate is and he is, turning his back on the audience (as modest southern gentlemen are wont to do) to execute the really tricky intense solo bits. What's that sound they make like the beating of giant wings? Tall Dwarfs treat their guitar songs to low-tech embellishments (tape loops, uni-chord) but it's still surprising to see them make melting moments out of the fuzz. And then - ta-da-da-da- — the

Sombretones, who released a four song EP with two really great songs last year but rarely play, 'cos this is like a side-project, being as how lead vocalist/12-string acoustic guitarist Craig Mason is also the Able Tasmans' drummer and Sombretones drummer Robert Keys used to be in the Cake Kitchen. They opened with the thrillingly ominous 'Good Evening Listeners' from the EP. Then they played a song that almost (gasp) sounded Australian (ie bland) before sweeping back with an agonisingly lovely number, the kind of song that holds you in a trance and makes you wish you had someone to hold. They kept coaxing out great songs, sort of warm but dangerous at the same time, Craig Mason's acoustic guitar sounding rich and crisp as Peking duck, Robert Keys a joy to watch on drums, keyboards and bass fleshing it out. Hard to imagine what Graeme Jefferies (who has taken himself and his overbearing "sensibility" to London) could have added to the mix. DONNA YUZWALK

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