



Tall Dwarfs, Chris Knox and Alec Bathgate.

TALL DWARFS
Weeville
(Flying Nun)

This is about the tenth release from the Tall Dwarfs (Chris Knox and Alec Bathgate) and as fine a place to start as any if you want to join the swollen ranks of their admirers. The sixteen tracks here add up to a rare combination of soul and dissonance, melody and tunelessness, social invective and celebrations of love. The songs take place against a background of strange syncopated rhythms (CK's tape loops) overlaid with — as Chris puts it in the bonzer bonus lyric handbook — chord sequences by Alec "of great beauty and resonance", plus Chris Knoxian oddities and idiosyncracies, like when the line of a song is traced by the weedy piping of an organ.

Each track is a certifiable departure from the last, from acoustic folk sing-along to agitated rhythm and highstrung harmonising, and there are one or two priceless songs, such as 'Hallelujah Boy' or 'Skin of My Teeth'.

You should buy this record if you always wondered what the fuss was about, and what the Tall Dwarfs reputation was based on. Now you know.

DONNA YUZWALK

RIDE
Nowhere
(Sire)

I used to think that Ride were just inept Valentine copyists, but in fact they know exactly what they're doing. They are to English noise-pop what Depeche Mode are to European industrial music. They take an obvious characteristic of the genre — a chewy, satisfying distortion/wah-wah based guitar sound, add pretty faces and tunes, and take away all the abrasion, the confrontation, the strangeness that made it exciting in the first place. In short, they're noise-pop without the noise, or at least without its implications. All the chord changes are either the wistful sort or the comfortable sort (never the jarring sort or the rare as Shane McGowan's good teeth shoot you into the stratosphere sort). The vocals are mixed up front and always sung (never spat out or screamed or sobbed) so we know that these are "proper songs". Curiously the overall effect recalls pre-noise 80s bands like Echo and the Bunnymen and the Sound or their more overt disciples the House of Love.

All this, of course, means that Ride are dangerously easy to listen to and even to like. The guitar sound's still there, the melodies are as sugar coated as they are predictable, and 'Dreams Burn Down' is an unreasonably pleasant song. It's just that these pleasures are so transitory, so weak, such a compromise. Ride are an attractive pop concept, and perhaps they'll introduce lots of 14 year olds to the joys of feedback, but considering that 'Psychocandy' did the same for my generation (!) do the youth of today really need such mollycoddling?

MATTHEW HYLAND

WHITE LION
Mane Attraction
(Atlantic)

White Lion continue to produce rock magic that is at the top of its class. Songs are drenched in emotion and insight, leaving tired themes and overdone topics to those with more hair than talent. *Mane Attraction* has a maturity that comes only through years of touring and hard work.

Like all rock heavyweights, White Lion have their own charismatic frontman in the form of one Mike Tramp. Unlike many other groups in this genre, he possesses a smooth and often haunting voice that sits among the other instruments rather than on top of them. He adds a rich blues feel to the group, which coaxes the listener and brings relief after constant assault from tight trousered Axel Rose plagiarists.

Why commercial radio never picks up on these groups is beyond me.

'Broken Heart', 'You're All I Need' and 'It's Over' are guaranteed money spinners. However, White Lion seem to excel in the left of centre areas. Check out 'Leave Me Alone' if you like things a little funky. Definitely worth a look.

LUKE CASEY

MASSIVE
Blue Lines
(Wild Bunch)

Some serious English dance pedigree going on here, these are the boys who pretty much spawned the Soul II Soul deal through their involvement with Nellie Hooper and who are responsible for a lot of the better dance remixes coming out of England. *Blue Lines* is their first solo work, and although it has all the hallmarks of one of those terrible producers albums (famous guest vocalists, big conceptual look and lots of serious drum programming), Massive have come out with a remarkably brilliant contribution to our listening pleasure. *Blue Lines* takes the whole mellowed out 98bpm dance music deal one step further. Massive draw more on jazz and reggae feels than the traditional funky sources.

This album is so smooth it makes Julio seem like a punk rocker. The sound is really reminiscent of those great 60s jazz/funk masterpieces like Grant Green or Lee Morgan. But with the added bonus of great vocals. Some really nice reggae stylings from Horace Andy and the now standard elegant soul from Shara Nelson, all underscored by spine chilling basslines and cooled-out raps from the Massive boys that give the whole affair a very sharp and vaguely malevolent feel. Tracks like 'Safe From Harm' and 'Five Man Army' are almost threatening and definitely far too cool for words. I have a feeling *Blue Lines* is going to be the best album to come out of England this year. Very Massive is a very fair description of what's going on here.

KIRK GEE

THE DOORS
Movie Soundtrack
(Warner Bros)

The movie is totally great and this soundtrack brings it all back, enabling you to relive the romantic excesses of Jim Morrison's life, as seen by Oliver Stone, at your leisure. In the movie, Stone lets the music tell the story and the songs appear here in the same chronological order as the film. Starting with 'The Movie' (spoken words by Morrison), Side One kicks off with 'Riders On The Storm', 'Love Street', 'Break On Through', 'The End', 'Light My Fire', 'Ghost Song'. Side Two goes 'Roadhouse Blues', 'Heroin' (performed by the Velvet Underground, along with 'Carmina Burana', the only non-Doors tracks on the album), 'Stoned Immaculate', 'When The Music's Over', 'The Severed Garden', and ending with a flourish with 'LA Woman'.

A class collection from the Doors immortal legacy.

DONNA YUZWALK

GRAND DADDY IV
Smooth Assassin
(Cold Chillin) Tape/CD

Check out the cover, there's the Grand Daddy and his crew dressed like old style gangsters, guns and knives all akimbo, some dude collapsed on the stairs, his money spread out, ready for the Grand Daddy.

I'm just glad romanticism has returned to rap, I mean that 'daisy age' stuff almost destroyed it. Do you really want white middle class buying rap! Saying, 'oh, these black folks are just so damn clever, so ethnic!'. Well, they're not going to touch this one, it's too old school in its philosophy, too much like real rhythm and blues.

Songs about sex, death, money and hanging out. The Grand Daddy means business, when he raps 'I Kick Ass' and 'Mass Destruction' you somehow know he's not kidding.

But the best thing about it is the fresh approach. The beats are nearly all old soul or seventies funk of the slow,

smooth and groovy sort. Things like the O'Jays, Isaac Hayes, Blackbyrds, Mandrill, mixed together by Biz Markie. Grand Daddy IV (said as one word!) just sort of coasts over the top, like he's getting a manicure at the same time or something.

Best cuts are 'Pick Up The Pace', 'This Is A Recording', 'Dominos' and the definitely un-safe sex of 'Girl In The Mall'. Great to see a rapper do a reggae song without destroying it,

'Gals Dem So Hot' is a smooth dance hall remix, using a Yellowman style.

I'd suggest you have a listen, if only for Biz Markie's super cool production.

KERRY BUCHANAN

DEBORAH HARRY AND BLONDIE
The Complete Picture
(Chrysalis)

So it's reissue time again is it? I guess we shouldn't be too surprised

Debbie, oops Deborah Harry, has proved herself to be an endlessly viable commodity.

Let's go back for a while. Even in the halcyon days of the late 70s/early 80s not too many pundits were able or indeed wanted to see beyond those exquisitely chiselled cheekbones and perfectly pouting lips. Advertising tags that proclaimed Blondie a "a group" appeared desperate and then superfluous. To most pop pickers,

Deborah Harry was Blondie: part pop queen, part sex kitten. Those rather plain gents she chose to surround herself with were scarcely relevant. Which was a shame because Blondie was a group and for a while back then they were arguably the finest singles band on the face of the planet.

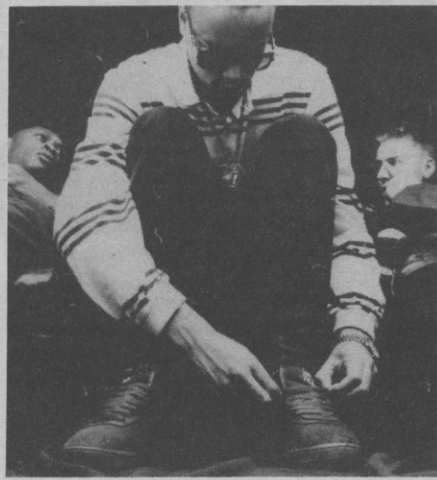
So here they come again, pristine pop snapshots, coy and sensual by turns. Memories are made of these, the irresistible trash aesthetic of 'Rip Her To Shreds', the insouciant candour of the glorious 'Picture This'. Then there's 'Sunday Girl', one of the most perfect three minutes in pop music, 'Atomic' and 'Presence, Dear' still scores through its spaced-out grandeur.

Great as Blondie were this twenty track set does throw up the odd clunker. 'Heart of Glass', the band's biggest hit, is endearing but rather clumsy discob, 'The Tide Is High' and 'Island of Lost Souls' are both pretty dire exercises in odd reggae. But I'm being churlish. Despite smacking of odious marketing ploys, *The Complete Blondie* (which runs the gamut of the divine Miss H career right up to the vaudeville turn with Iggy on 'Well, Did You Evah?') is irrefutable evidence of the woman (and the band's) frequent greatness.

GARTH SEEAR



Ride



Massive

The KLF

The White Room

features the hits 3AM ETERNAL
WHAT TIME IS LOVE?
LAST TRAIN TO
TRANSCENTRAL

music is music is music. KLF is art.

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