

# albums

## DE LA SOUL De La Soul Is Dead (Liberation)

So it's now turnaround time for the enfants terrible of rap, the boys who winged one in from left field with *Three Feet High And Rising* and basically changed the way everyone thought about rap, for a while at least. Seems De La Soul have got tired of the whole Daisy Age schtick and now want to be tougher, no more of this new man stuff. And how different is *De La Soul Is Dead* Well, soundwise, not a great deal really. That laid back drawing rap style is still pretty much to the fore and the beats are still pretty innovative so far as the layers of samples and whatever go, although the very fine and funky single 'Ring Ring Ring Ha Ha Hey' does trot out some James Brown riffs. The only real difference seems to be attitude-wise, the boys are a little older and world weary and so talk about Daisies dying and stuff. They also do a heap more of those really annoying bits between songs, lots of live in studio dicking around with friends and the like. There really is no need at all for someone doing a fucked version of 'Chopsticks' complete with bad rap, which is the case with 'Johnny's Dead Aka Vincent Mason'. Fortunately the actual songs are good enough to carry this stuff, like the way 'Johnny' is followed by 'A Roller Skating Jam' which mixes a real nice 70s soul feel with some beserk scratching. When De La Soul are good they're really good and although *De La Soul Is Dead* may not win over the doubters, it's good enough to keep the fans real happy.

KIRK GEE

## SHABBA RANKS As Raw As Ever (Epic)

Shabba, born Rexton Gordon, but Shabba is better. The regal name of Africa, and more importantly the same name as two slain Jamaican bandits. He is the dancehall ruler, he who manifests the truth of drum and bass. Hits have flowed like bubbles in bottles of Asti Spumante in the past two years there have been 50 singles, irresistible things like 'Wicked In Bed', 'Roots and Culture', 'Twice My Age' and 'Golden Touch'. We are not just talking star but as he described himself, "a galaxy." Well, this one is a big one for Shabba, a major label expects world domination with this. So it's pleasing to see the image and the music intact, like they haven't turned him into a reggae popsicle, a ragga MC Hammer or something. No, it's still hard core dancehall production from Bobby Digital in that sparse electronic feel, similar to his work on last years 'Just Reality', just a pulse beat with a few keyboard touches, the voice being the main concern. Shabba can ride a rhythm like all the past and present DJ greats, a baritone that booms in raucous style over Mr Digital's variations on the ZigTUp rhythm.

Then again the best track, 'Trailer Load A Girls' is a Steely and Cleve job that is a real cooker. Shabba is always good in a 'slack style', that is songs of a sexual nature. On display here is 'Flesh Fixe', 'Fist-A-Ris' and 'Gone Up' but of course there is the denial in 'Where Does Slackness Come From'. In which Shabba hasn't got a clue why people think he has a weakness for slackness, saying things like 'never see me face in a blue movie', so sexism is not something one could accuse him of. Unless you think a trailer load of girls is a bad thing.

Apart from sex the other thing that gets a dancehall hot is guns. Big problem in Jamaica when the fans think a performer is smokin they start blasting their big irons into the air, bang bang, it's a hit. The whole mythos of the gun runs thick in the dancehall as it does in hip-hop culture. Shabba goes the way of all right thinking people by getting all metaphoric, like a bullet from his gun is really a thought from his mind, yep, sure thing.

The two stabs at cross over appeal work well, first the traditional lovers feel of 'Housecall' with Maxi Priest, and the hip-hop duet with KRS I — 'The Jam'. But the real strength is in the straight out dancehall workouts like 'A Mi Oi Girls Dem Love' and 'Woman Triangle', that's where Shabba gets in deep.

One more step in the path of world Shabbarisation.

KERRY BUCHANAN

## ICE-T O.G. Original Gangster (Sire)

The man is back, the undisputed king of west coast hardcore rap, the hardest working hustler in show business, Mr Ice-T. Now let's get some prejudices clear here. I like Ice-T, I think he does a fine job of creating some of the toughest sounds since Black Sabbath and I don't find his lyrics in the least bit offensive. In fact, they're kind of funny. Now that's cleared up I can say that O.G. . . . is one seriously cool record. Ice is back with the serious shit, doing all the gangster mythology stuff. We are talking a serious bodycount on this album and just generally being the baddest of the bad. Ice can do that (even though his Street Mood pose is sort of less than believable) because he has the musical muscle to back it all up. With some extra help from DJ Aladdin, things really rip here. 'Mind Over Matter' actually uses a Public Enemy sample without sounding like something Pop Will Eat Shit would do. 'New Jack Hustler' is classic Ice-T — all cooler-than-thou vocals with serious menace and 'Flyby' which is another 'What You Wanna Do' deal with a bunch of Syndicate boys doing the fast'n' furious.

Probably the utter high point has to be 'Midnight', O.G.'s version of '6 AM'. Lyrically it's sort of stupid but the beat is so brutal and the rap so evil the whole thing becomes really chilling, Ice-T at his finest. Naturally there's moments most people won't like. I thought 'Bodycount' featuring Ice's own heavy



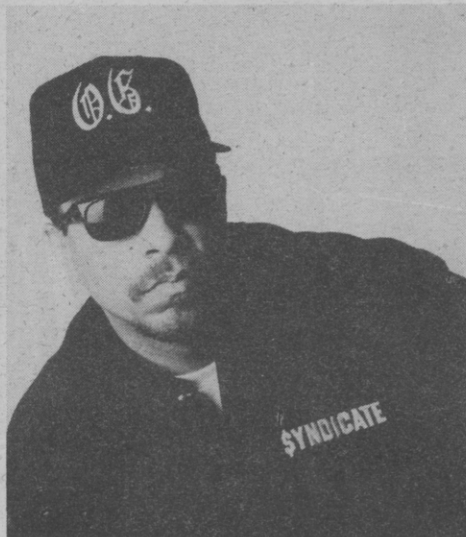
De La Soul



Shabba Ranks



Trent Reznor, Nine Inch Nails



Ice-T

metal project was offensive 'cos it sounded like Iron Maiden. Stuff like 'Bitches 2' or 'Straight Up Nigga' will no doubt upset the more liberal listeners, but hell, Ice at least is making a genuine attempt to articulate his ideas. He's just a little keen on causing trouble for the moralists while he does it. But basically, if it upsets you, don't listen to it. Say it's dumb, buy your sensitive singer/songwriter opuses, don't tread on grass in case you hurt it, do whatever you have to do. Me, I say fuck that weak shit. I'm going to listen to *Original Gangster* because it has the serious boom and it reminds me of all the things that made me like rap in the first place.

KIRK GEE

## NINE INCH NAILS Pretty Hate Machine (Island)

Album title of the year for a start: absolutely any rock band worth the amphetamine flavoured candyfloss it's made of aspires to the delicate

balance of sex, vulnerability and violence that the words "Pretty Hate Machine" encapsulate. (No, the Cocteau Twins aren't an exception; they're a unicorn or a Miro painting or a coral reef, anything but a rock band.)

Anyway, Trent Reznor, a man whose "death" in a music video was investigated by the FBI for six months, is Nine Inch Nails, and he makes a better job than could have been expected of living up to the title's promise. Essentially, he takes the Wax Trax electro hardcore aesthetic and makes plastic-explosive pop music with it. It's a formula that backfired grotesquely for Depeche Mode and more recently Front 242, but Reznor gets away with it through his relentless fury and almost infallible judgement of dynamics. The bpm straitjacket has been removed altogether, giving the songs the chance to recoil then lash out and draw blood. This simple trick makes for epiphanic moments like the chorus of 'Head Like A Hole' when the listener, already aroused by a

threatening sub-D.A.F. bassline, is suddenly transported into a whole new dimension of noise, rhythm and blazing anger.

Reznor can't put his crises into words with anything like the precision of, say, Michael Gira, but that doesn't matter because unlike Swans, Nine Inch Nails isn't a vehicle for "serious" art. Like the Hoodlum Priest album, *Pretty Hate Machine* is a pure pop record for messed up kids (like me and you and both your friends) who don't know how to party down, man.

MATTHEW HYLAND

## EURYTHMICS Greatest Hits (RCA)

Now that Annie's taking a couple of years off to look after baby it seems a logical time to issue this career overview. And for a change *Greatest Hits* doesn't seem an exaggeration. Every one of these 18 tracks achieved singles chart success: not a bad strike rate over less than a decade.

The (not quite chronological) running order makes it easy to trace the evolving of Eurythmics. From the early days of synthesiser obsession, through a frantic eclecticism (with guest vocalists and instrumentalists galore) then back-to-basics rock band and to the recent simplified sophistication, Dave Stewart always seemed a particularly restless rock-meister. And if his sounds would at times appear cold there was always Annie's voice to warm them up. Hearing her duet with Aretha Franklin on 'Sisters Are Doing It For Themselves' is alone sufficient reminder of how good a singer she is.

With such a wide range of musical approaches gathered here it's unlikely that every single track will appeal but at 77 minutes for one CD there's got to be value for money involved for most tastes. *Eurythmics Greatest Hits* provides an excellent account of one of the 80s' foremost acts.

PETER THOMSON

## FAITH NO MORE Live At Brixton Academy (Slash)

Yet another record from these funk musketeers, this one has recently been released to coincide with the video of this particular British concert. It seems quite ironic, this was the concert where the crowd control barrier was demolished and Faith No More are responsible for breaking down more than a few musical barriers. They deserve more than a little praise for that.

It is safe to say that we have seen these songs before. Any fans of the group will have collected the numerous records already released. There are some redeeming features, such as the jazzy 'Edge of the World' and Mr Patton's allusions to New Kids On The Block, but I am tiring of this material and look forward to hearing a new studio record.

The quality of this record shines through, but my advice is to hold your breath for something more worth while in the near future. Hopefully Faith No More will remain at the cutting edge of the modern Funk-Metal explosion.

LUKE CASEY

## THE DOORS In Concert (Elektra)

A three album set, over two hours of the Doors live in concert, comprised of material previously found on *Absolutely Live*, *Alive She Cried* and *Live At The Hollywood Bowl*, all three since deleted from catalogue.

Digitally remastered recordings taken from concerts between 1968 and 1970, in which Morrison appears in fine voice, with the added spooky bonus of hearing him ad lib interjections between songs. Tracks include 'The End' (15 minutes, previously unavailable), 'When The Music Is Over', 'Gloria', 'Light My Fire', 'Break On Through' and 'Little Red Rooster'. A marathon, but a triple treat for Doors freaks.

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