

# albums

## RED HOT CHILLI PEPPERS Blood Sugar Sex Magik (Warner Bros)

First up I might as well own up to being totally biased about the Chilli Peppers, I like them a lot, I've liked them for about 5 years, ever since I heard their first album, and I'll probably like them right up til they're playing the lounges in Vegas in some 80s retrospective show. Therefore it's not really any surprise I like this new album, but I'll try to explain why I think you'll like it too. After more than a few listenings, it seems to me that the RHCP have really found a groove with *Blood Sugar Sex Magik*, all those disparate elements don't so much blend nicely here, they reflect off each other. All those styles that are so crucial to have in your music nowadays are here, but they've all been thoroughly Chilli-ised.

Rick Rubin has added his usual low-key production job, which for once doesn't sound utterly non. The sheer force of the Peppers personas and vision carries this along, Rick just keeps everything at the right levels and so-forth. Surprisingly he doesn't direct the band in the mega Sabbath rock style he seems so fond of and which the Chilli's dabbled with on the last album, instead the feel is a bit more restrained and funky in the sense of Funkadelic's tripped out vision. Songs flow, 'Funky Monks' veers from a sparse rap into a fully psychedelic solo,



Guns'n'Roses

'Give It Away' is superbly singalong, 'Sir PsychoSexy' could be Parliament in a down and dirty mode, 'Apache Rose Peacock' is a beautifully dumbass Chilli paen to true love, 'Mellowship Slinky' namechecks the cool and the crazy, Flea plain pumps, Fruscante effortlessly blends chickenscratch with full-on riffing and The Red Hot Chilli

Peppers have come up with the most perfect locally released album I've heard in a long time. I've damn near worn this puppy out over the last week, yet I hear something new everytime I play it. Biased though I may be, it certainly seems as though the flawed genius of The Red Hot Chilli Peppers has relly come together on this one, it's



Prince

seventy-something minutes of sex and sweat and beauty and fun and everything rock music should be.  
KIRK GEE

## GUNS'N'ROSES Use Your Illusion I & II (Geffen)

Here it is, the long overdue second coming of Guns'n'Roses, not one but two double albums, eight sides in total! Sitting down to this is a massive undertaking but worth it because in amongst the inevitable slack moments, Guns'n'Roses prove that they're still in a class apart from the mass of their hard rock contemporaries.

There is something heartening, touching even, about the way Guns'n'Roses see themselves as carriers of the rock n'roll flame, all but doused by the corporate rock behemoths who dominate today's recording "industry". Despite their huge fame and fortune, it's obvious Guns'n'Roses still believe passionately in the power and glory of rock n'roll, as established by greater talents that have gone before them, to whom they pay tribute in the form of a cover or two (a hackneyed version of Dylan's 'Knockin' On Heaven's Door') and inspired imitations of *Exile On Main Street* era Stones, plus touches of Queen-style guitar and Alice Cooper even gets to sing his own song ('The Garden').

The much heralded musical experimentation isn't as blatant as feared. Aside from the occasional weird outing like Axel's dynamic rap number, a lot of the songs are straight-ahead rock guitar and vocal blitz, Axel's lyrics dodgy as ever. The boys are still burnin' with righteous anger aimed at everything from neighbours ('Right Next Door To Hell') to girlfriends ('Back Off Bitch') to rock critics! ('Get In The Ring' comes complete with name-checks). But then there are the ballads, the slow, mushy, emotional numbers Axel warbles so well, notably 'Don't Cry' — really, it's hard not to when you listen to this.

So, although a release as sprawling as this dissipates the band's energy and focus, and there aren't as many seat belt-tightening moments as on *Appetite*, Guns'n'Roses have more than delivered the goods. They're now painting on a broader musical canvas and sometimes the intensity thins out, but these guys are in it for the long haul and on the basis of these two albums, they deserve to last the course.  
DONNA YUZWALK

## THE WENDYS Gobbledygook (Factory)

## NORTHSIDE Chicken Rythms (Factory)

## THE MOCK TURTLES Two Sides (Siren)

More revisionist pre and post-baggy product from the mutha country. Both Factory acts — The Wendys and Northside — are produced by Ian Broudie and he's developed the knack of dusting a band down without sacrificing the charms of indiedom for the gloss of the bigger conglomerates. Edinburgh's The Wendys are the pick of this moderately talented trio. Riding on the crest of guitarist Ian White's choppy, chiming guitar lines and Jonathan Renton's matter-of-fact singing, their lightly stepping funk recalls a clean-cut Happy Mondays without the intense rhythm stick.

*Gobbledygook* doesn't re-define ecstasy but it has a consistency that's rare enough in any long player never mind a debut. 'Something's Wrong Somewhere', the earthier but catchy 'Halfpie' and the longer pensive

funkiness of 'The Sun's Going To Shine For Me Soon' are just three of the eleven indications on the album that the Wendys should survive baggyism. Pursue.

Mancunian label mates, Northside, can't hold it together quite so well. This funky chicken, even at its best, can't dispel early notions that this band are still clinging to the flared precepts of the Stone Roses. Starting with the best and their new single 'Take Five' stands tall with its chunky, pithy, cute delivery and the followers 'Weight of Air' and 'Funky Monkey' are strong enough to retain interest despite the indie predictability and jangling six-strings. But by the wah-wah of 'Yeah Man' and last year's far too lightweight single 'Shall We Take A Trip', it's obvious that Northside are only competent also-rans who play nice guitars, have an inoffensive line in vocals and are pleasant to dance to. This chicken doesn't bite.

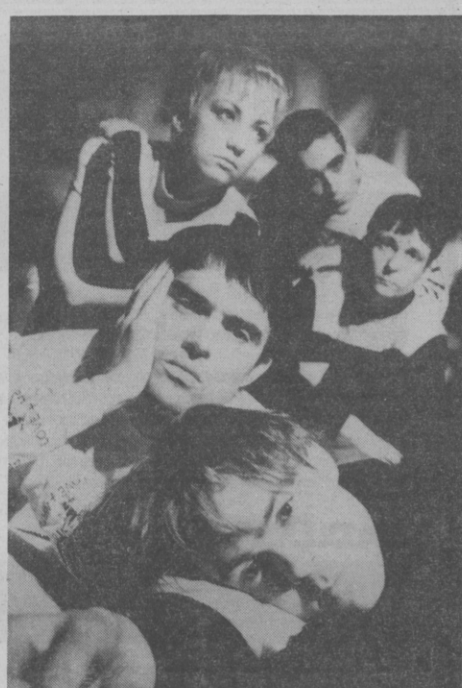
As a name the Mock Turtles has a high smart-ass present just like a Prefab Sprout or Steely Dan and sure enough Mark Coogan, the alec leading this Manchester quintet, is a pop raconteur. That at least explains the feeling of depth and eclecticism that exudes from *Two Sides*, their second album or third if you take into account a compilation of their late 80s formative years that was released earlier this year.

So Coogan is no fresh-faced Mancunian copyist; he may borrow from the same Byrds and British sources as do his slightly younger contemporaries but he's been around long enough to absorb their influences into his songs and make them integral and natural rather than mere reflections or record collections. That means his best songs like 'And Then She Smiles', 'Baby and the Stars' and the winsome 'Can You Dig It' arrive as classically inspired and executed examples of the real thing, although they're not.

Highlights aside, the Mock Turtles can't quite sustain the effortless class of 'Can You Dig It' as Coogan's ballads — 'Brush Of A Butterfly's Wing', 'Words of Wisdom' and 'Deep Down' are a touch plain — a contrast in an album that offers some authentic retrospection minus the flares. Conditionally guaranteed.  
GEORGE KAY

## 808 STATE Lift / Open EP (ZTT)

808 State keep nature out of music. They abolish all trace of the physical act of "playing" an instrument, proving that all that's required to make music is imagination and the learnable ability to operate certain machines, not "natural talent" or the magical ability to "express" emotion through one's fingers/vocal chords etc. Thus they threaten the privileged power of the physically dextrous to make decisions about what music should sound like, and it's for this reason that hippy muso-bozos see them as the satanic love-spawn of Jason Donovan and Jenny Shipley. (see full story with intimate photos in next month's *Splinter*). Of course they wouldn't worry anyone if they were complete crap, but it's obvious just from listening to this EP that they're not. The 7" version of 'Lift' is a regrettable 70s flashback, genuine lift music with Casio violins, but the 'Heavy Mix' of 'Lift' and the 'Open' and 'Sound Garden' (no don't get excited West Auckland, there's not a guitar thrust in sight) mixes are rich, texturally varied electronic sound-meshes, uncompromising but accessible and even danceable if you go in for that sort of thing.  
MATTHEW HYLAND



The Mock Turtles

## PRINCE Diamonds & Pearls (Paisley Park)

It can't be easy following up with new albums when you've already cut some of the greatest funk of all time on your first four. So rather than surge ahead, Prince has been overtaking from the left: dipping into British glam, American psychedelia and the gene pools of Minneapolis, a town which apparently spawns more than its fair share of short attractive people. Must be sumthin' in the water.

Like George Clinton and James Brown, Prince has the bandleader's knack of articulating personal soul via others (remember, *three* people sung lead vocals on '1999'). During *Sign Of The Times* he settled on the perfect work technique: get the musicians together in a 48-track studio, jam like a mother till five in the morning, then take the tapes away for hours of remixing and vocal overdubs.

New Power Generation are the latest proteges. We don't know where they came from but if Wendy & Lisa's post-Revolution careers are any indication, we know where they're going. Meantime they've achieved an accomplished, laid-back feel on *Diamonds & Pearls*. The versatility of the music in here recalls *Sign Of The Times* but the LP cruises with ensemble consistency.

Prince and the band shake all the money makers: 'Daddy Pop', 'Push' and 'Gett Off' all hark back to his early funk stuff. Threads of a more diverse nature run through 'Insatiable' (like 'Slow Love'), 'Walk Don't Walk' (like 'I Wonder U') and 'Cream' — probably the best track, a choppy Marc Bolan obscurity ('U got the horn so why don't U blow it') that rethinks funk into something more, uh, seminal.

The title track is classic Vandross fare with 'Penny Lane' horn riffs. 'Live 4 Love' samples the onboard computer in *Barbarella*. On *Sign Of The Times* Prince juggled different styles, here they blend more naturally. His musical vocabulary sprawls, a library of hip. Roles are swapped like a Sly Stone album.

It's a baroque mix, but it's controlled. There's a lot on *Diamonds & Pearls* beyond the gimmicks and eclectisms, in particular a feeling that Prince is back on his own crooked path after the last two albums. Moreover, it's as cool as fuck.  
CHAD TAYLOR

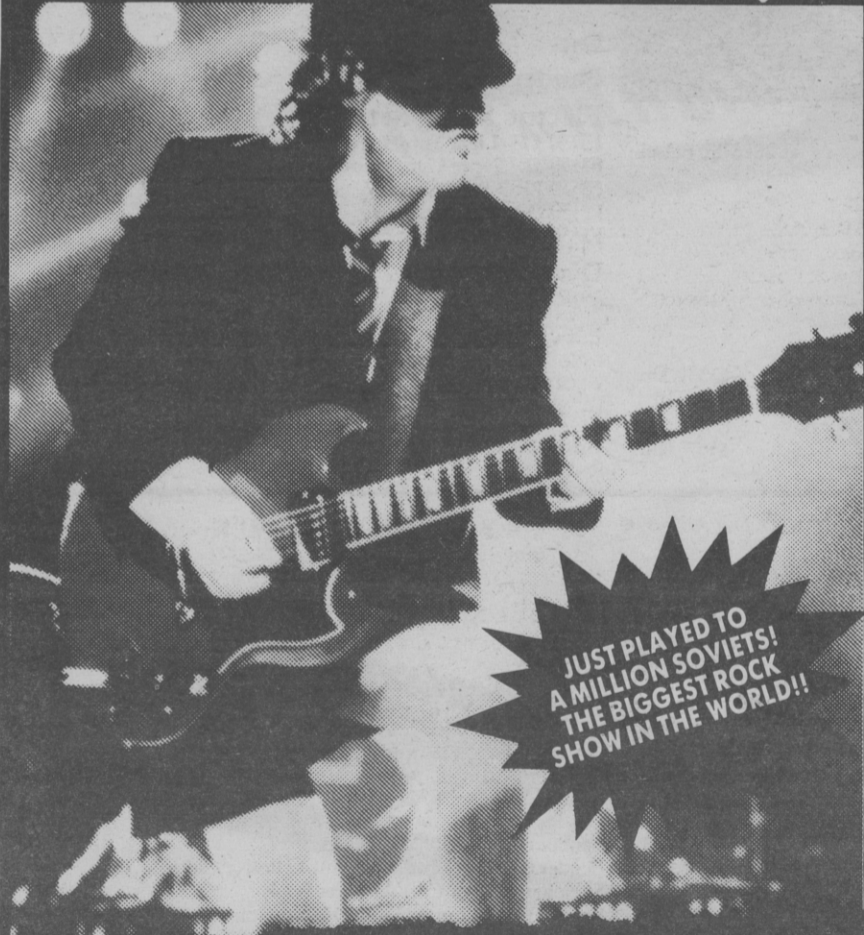
## DINOSAUR JNR Fossils (SST)

Using a pun on the band's name as an album title is a naff gesture of the kind you wouldn't expect from a (formerly?) hip label like SST, but life's full of these little surprises. *Fossils* could function either as an introduction to Dinosaur Jnr for anyone who's been locked in a Buddhist monastery or just asleep for the last five years, or as a luxury item for the pedantic fan with lots of money they don't know how to spend. It's a collection of the *Dinosaur Jnr*, *Freak Scene* and *Just Like Heaven* EPs, which equals three sublime album tracks ('Little Fury Things' and 'In A Jar' from *Your'e Living All Over Me* and 'Freak Scene' from *Bug*), three way weird covers (the Cure's 'Just Like Heaven' with the famous abrupt ending, Last Rite's 'Chunks' and 'Show Me The Way' by 70s biological accident Peter Frampton) and two original oddities, a very short strange one called 'Throw Down' and a mainly acoustic one called 'Keep The Glove'. It all makes for a very pleasant, nostalgic forty minutes or so of listening but it should *not*, under any circumstances, be used (ie bought) as a substitute for the original albums.  
MATTHEW HYLAND

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