

# albums

## U2 Achtung Baby (Island)

What can you do when you're the world's most popular rock 'n' roll band? Retrench into proven formula, dilute the music to reach an even wider market on Mars or follow the dictates of your gut and come out swinging since people are gonna buy it anyway.

With REM's *Out Of Time* as a timely reminder of a rationalised softening-in-the-middle, U2, after a three year absence, could have been tolerated for bringing in banks of strings to sing about dolphins and ozone depletion. But *Achtung Baby* carries the threat of its title: this isn't easy listening, this is the Edge sucked into some kind of Hendrix sonic storm with Bono singing with more control and variety than he's ever hinted possible.

*The Fly*, not untypical of some of the meaner songs, sounds like a deliberate attempt at cutting a swathe through the complacent prats that are currently monopolising the hit parade. And it's done just that when the band could've opted for the more palatable and beautiful ballads of 'So Cruel' or 'Trying To Throw Your Arms Around The World' to spread the gospel that *Achtung Baby* has arrived.

And the sadder songs have their place on the new album with 'One' drawing the best out of Bono with its conciliatory but assertive stand-off and 'Who's Gonna Ride Your Wild Horses' is the Edge breaking glass over Bono's personal problems. But rightly or wrongly it's the aggression in the face of possible compromise that's gonna make *Achtung Baby* the U2 album to draw in the fringe cynics such as myself. The metropolitan frenzy of 'Zoo Station' makes a startling opener and that's reinforced by 'Even Better Than The Real Thing' and the shuddering 'Until The End of the World'. And 'Acrobat' features the Edge etching a fight shimmering wall of melody for Bono's excesses.

U2 could've released a format of bathtub songs for junior and it would still have gone quintuple platinum. So the radical bite of *Achtung Baby* is a luxury they could afford but that aside it shows that despite their massive and obtrusive materialist comforts, they are closer to the rawness and intensity of rock 'n' roll than at any other time in their careers. They might even get promoted from stadiums to clubs.  
GEORGE KAY

## THE PUDDLE Live At The Teddy Bear Club (Flying Nun)

This isn't new stuff, recorded in '87 and already having seen release on the Infinite Regress *Live In The Palm Of Your Hand* tape, smart work on Flying Nun's part or what? But, yeah, ok —



U2



Perry Farrell, Jane's Addiction.

considering that this is practically a fossil already it's no mean thing, a less flakily recorded example of George Henderson's songsmithery than its predecessor, the 1985 *Pop Lib* EP and a showcase of a lineup (Henderson/Ross Jackson/Lesley Paris with occasional intrusions from Norma O'Malley) that was as hot as this particular murky and forgotten branch of rock 'n' roll ever got... can't claim

that anything on record so far provides the kind of rocket-up-your-ass trip these Puds are patently capable of furnishing, but for that you've maybe gotta see 'em live. At least ten or 20 times. Meanwhile, back there in Dunedin, Mr Henderson now has a whole new Puddle line-up operative, self-described as the best yet, with a whole pile of new song and slick new recordings thereof already in the can.

... and who knows, maybe round about 1994 or something you'll see 'em on wax, hold your breath. But right now, this album... it ain't the sort of thing that happens along every day. Buy it and find out for yourself, what else've you got to spend your money on, Xmas presents for your family or something?  
DUANE ZARAKOV

## JANE'S ADDICTION Live And Rare (Warner Bros)

I was never that big on Jane's Addiction until I actually saw them live, at which point it was apparent that useless artistic junkies they may be, they surely can cut it as far as the live thing goes. Add to this the fact that at times they can write nice punchy hit songs, and their stardom seems pretty logical. Now that they are no more (in theory anyway) the record company are busy finding things to release, and *Live And Rare* is a great first attempt. It is exactly what the title suggests, a bunch of things that never made it to albums and some in concert stuff. It's quite a good sampler of Jane's Addiction, from the whacked out pop of 'Been Caught Stealing' in a remix form, through the out and out noise of



Tina Turner

the LA Medley (LA Woman/Nausea/Lexicon Devil live) to the simple 'Jane Says' demo, all the bases are covered. Whereas normally these sort of things are best left to fans only, *Live And Rare* has been put together in such a way that it would definitely be worth a listen for not only the converted, but the curious too.  
KIRK GEE

## PET SHOP BOYS Discography (Parlophone) TINA TURNER Simply The Best (Innerfusion)

One of the several benefits of CD takeover is that albums are generally getting longer and this particularly true of greatest hits/best of collections. Where you'd once get an LP of 35-40 minutes, we're now getting twice that much. Both these discs clock in at 77 minutes and so provide good value for money. Nonetheless, first and foremost they're still marketing exercises and both share the questionable inclusion of a few new tracks to tempt the devoted fan who already owns everything else. And while the bonus tracks on each disc are pretty good ones they don't really rank among 'simply the best' available. By that yardstick I'd swap any of Turner's new ones for the title track from her last album *Foreign Affair*. I'd similarly argue that, say, 'My October Symphony' from last year's *Pet Shop Boys' Behaviour* is superior to *Discography's* last two tracks.

But then *Discography* is subtitled 'The Complete Singles Collection' so for the longtime fan it provides a marvellous replacement for all that scratchy vinyl. Newer listeners, who perhaps only began paying attention (and respect) when the Boys started working with Dusty Springfield or Liza Minnelli, may find much of the album too disco-orientated. If so, try investigating the delights available on the shouldabehuge *Behaviour*. Either way there's no excuse for anyone still undervaluing the talents of Tennant and Lowe. (besides, hooking up a U2 song with a cliched chestnut like 'Can't Take My Eyes Off You' and setting them to a pounding computer beat has gotta show serious taste).

Tina Turner's compilation may be saddled with a couple of TV jingles — the title track for rugby league and Channel 2's 'It Takes Two' — but otherwise it makes nearly all the right moves. While obviously focussing on her career from the mid-80s onwards, it also scoops up the original 'River Deep, Mountain High' along with a terrific house-style reworking of 'Nutbush City Limits'. I've heard some purists get snuffy about Tina abandoning her R'n'B roots but that's nonsense, as one listen to the live 'Addicted To Love' patently proves. She's a rock 'n' roll superstar, a 50-something grandmother, a sex symbol (check the cover photo) and still the woman whom God sent to show us how to dance in high heels.  
PETER THOMSON

## FIREHOSE Flyin' the Flannel (Columbia)

By now I suppose anyone who cares knows that Firehose used to be cutting edge punk greats the Minutemen, so I'll save you the history lesson and just explain that in the true Firehose tradition, they've created another

exceptionally good record.

Like a lot of their previous efforts, *From Ohio* and *Ragin' Full On* particularly, *Flyin' The Flannel* pulls together the sub three minute punk aesthetic, sixties melodies and some progressive jazz/funk. Naturally this simply does not blend, and therein lies Firehose's appeal. There's a real tension to what they do, it seems as if they're trying intently to hold it all together musically. At times they just plain soar, like 'Down With The Bass' which is 2'47" of pure exhilaration, then on a track like 'The Last Cuss' there is a real spikey, messy feel, like the song has barely held together to a logical end.

One thing is consistent though, and that is Firehose's power. These guys can play real well, they're very uncompromising as far as sounding how they want and they know how to deliver a musical punch that will leave you reeling, which is what counts in the end. The more I hear this, the more I'm convinced it's Firehose's finest offering yet.  
KIRK GEE

## LOOK BLUE GO PURPLE Compilation (Flying Nun)

Look Blue Go Purple made their best record first. *Bewitched*, a product of the EP era, when those QEII Arts Council grants always seemed to be just enough to bring home four or five songs in a budget studio, now looks like not only the best to come out of that milieu, but one of the most complete, cohesive records ever made here.

It's probably because the timing was right. The band still hugged up and followed each other around the tunes like they did around whatever shindigs were going (it's no coincidence that the band shot on the inlay is a party pic). Terry Moore came up with the best production of a fledgling career, all soft, boomy atmosphere. 'As Does The Sun', Norma O'Malley's flute spiralling around Denise Roughan's gorgeous lyric and the whole band rising and falling with the tune, is magic, pure and simple.

LBGP2 saw them broaden their palette — from the arrangements of 'Hiawatha' to the perkiness of 'Cactus Cat', but it seemed to miss the warmth of Lab Studios, even if the songs were no less intriguing.

*This Is This*, recorded a little after the fact in 1987-88, was, if things had gone differently, the record that was ripe for the big-time studio treatment. Later gems like 'In Your Favour' and 'Conscious Unconscious' are sophisticated and assured and 'I Don't Want You Anyway' could have been their big radio hit. But the recordings, from the wee studio at Dunedin's Radio One, are flat and drab and Lesley Paris sounds like she's playing drums made of damp cardboard.

LBGP probably wrote a few duff songs, but none of them are here. At heart, if not always in execution, this is as fine a body of work as you could hope for.  
RUSSELL BROWN

