

CONSOLIDATED Friendly Fa\$cisim (Network)

White boy rappers are certainly nothing new, but there's never really been anything quite like Consolidated. These San Franciscans have been carving out quite a niche for themselves over the last couple of years, they use some of the most uncompromising beats around, and lyrically they go way beyond uncompromising. These guys are the serious white liberals, and they're not afraid to let you know. But where most 'political' lyrics can wear thin quickly, Consolidated's angry stance and very heavy rap attack power through any lapses into whining. Samples are used to maximum effect, from the more traditional hip hop styled tracks like 'Brutal Equation' to the heavily pastiched stuff like 'White American Male '91 Part 2', which is basically beats and samples. Tracks are linked by some pretty intense little sampled/spoken bursts, and no one is spared, from the usual liberal targets like government, racists, big business and the like right down to college radio hipsters. All this crusading is well and good, but you need the music to back it, and Consolidated have no worries there — this is powerful stuff.

JAMES Seven (Polygram)

James were never an outstanding band, sure they may have been covered by the Smiths — but they lacked any aspect of importance. Then *bam* they bombarded us with 'How Was It For You' and 'Sit Down'. The transformation was incredible, but the album *Gold Mother* failed to capture the moment. Hang on though — just as you thought you could dismiss it all as fluke or trickery, they've released *Seven* — an album that succeeds. Some would call their relaxed rock-come-pop weak or unthreatening, but musical snobbery aside, James' overall sound works well.



Consolidated



The Gadflys

They're a band who scream through whippers, whose violin, trumpet and synth additions sound clean rather than cluttered. And though sounding a little too Simple Minds for my liking at times, James have finally found that all-elusive mass appeal factor.

Lyrical commentaries on Godlessness, war, paranoia and privacy possess their characteristic intelligence. They're the lyrics of a band consumed by thought rather than those desperate to preach and the musical accompaniment does them justice. 'Mother', one of their finest moments, backs the lines "These wards are motherfuckers / how many songs must we kill today" with incredibly atmospheric, drawn-out guitar. 'Protect Me' is full of the same 'Sit Down' magic and the final track, 'Seven', is a fitting crescendo of trumpet and high hat behind the apt "now we've done our time, we can drift away" (into the limelight no doubt).

James have surpassed most of their previous offerings on this album, it's the album *Gold Mother* should have been. *Seven* must be seen as a success for them.

JOHN TAITE

EXTREMITIES The Earache Sampler (Relativity / Earache)

Unfortunately this isn't one you can all go out and buy, as it's a promo sampler, but it's great to give you an idea of what's happening at the far edges of rock. It's pretty easy to be glib about this stuff, either writing it off as good for a laugh or getting bogged down in the whole semantics of utterly extreme metal and why the Europeans do this, but neither approach is very fair as this is definitely more than novelty stuff.

There's six bands represented here by two tracks each from current albums. I was most interested by Godflesh, who are a seminal industrial / metal act, and Cathedral, the ex-Napalm Death vocalist's doom act. Godflesh deliver beautifully, both tracks from *Pure* are like William Burroughs' nightmares made aural, a mix of programmed sound and white noise. Cathedral are a bit non, just like death metal slowed down a lot, nothing that made me pay attention.

Also here are Carcass doing the total extreme splatter metal thing, Entombed, who sound like a more traditional act gone real ugly, Confessor, who could be Jane's Addiction meets Carcass and lastly, a pleasant surprise with Old. The tracks are from *Low Flux Tube*, an album I will be buying for sure. They are musically pushing things too far, a total wall of guitars, huge drums and just plain power, then the vocals start.

Whoever's singing is really angry about something, and I don't want to know what. He literally screams his lungs out, pure anger and aggression. Maybe not the sort of thing you can listen to every day, but pretty cool at the right time.

These bands might well seem like real minority listening, but that's only from lack of exposure. They are all doing their thing with quality and integrity and with more and more people realising that what the mainstream presents as wild and dangerous is little more than cocaine-fueled play acting, the underground seems far more sensible. If you're one of those people who have gone from Maiden to Motley to Metallica and still aren't happy, then take a listen to some of this stuff, it

makes sense. Flying In is importing it so write to them or Aaaaargghh! Magazine in Palmerston North, which not only knows this scene well, but treats it intelligently. There's a whole new world out there for you.

KIRK GEE

THE LEVELLERS Levelling The Land (China Records)

The Levellers are a quaint bunch. With the strut, swagger and war cries of a low grade Clash they're prickly about being compared to the Pogues, probably because they hope their music strikes up a similar traditional anarchic fever.

Taking their name from the group that offered a truly democratic impulse in the 1640s, the Levellers seem duty bound to graft that revolutionary zeal onto their ham-fisted hybrid of heavy jigs, reels and anthemic power chords. Cliches of liberty and rants against tyranny tumble from their lips on 'Liberty Song', 'Sell Out' and 'Another Man's Cause' where "gunshots shatter the peace of night".

Mythical meetings with real folk over jugs of ale, reminiscing over working class causes get the treatment on 'One Way', 'The Game' and 'The Riverflows' and if the band has one saving grace other than their hilarious lack of humour in peddling such rather old chestnuts, it's their occasional proximity to the Waterboys courtesy of the likes of 'The Road'. Lock up your Maypoles.

GEORGE KAY

THE GADFLYS The Gadflys (Phantom)

I saw these Australians live on their recent visit here and they were the proverbial 'amazing discovery'. A three-piece jazzy combo of double bass, acoustic guitar and clarinet, the Gadflys tossed a healthy dollop of what I suppose is folk music into the mix, but in case that didn't throw everybody, they cover things like 'The Passenger'. All in all it was a very cool concept that worked live. The good news is that if you missed them, the whole mess works on record as well and this six-track effort is the proof. If anything, this works better as they've boosted the sound in places by adding percussion and piano while managing

HARBORNE & ARTHUR

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