

# albums



Gary Moore & B.B. King.

you could name going on at one point or another, but it's all subject to the random space warp of Axemen irony (rhymes with 'my pony', apparently). The result beggars (and quite likely buggers) description: it's a wonderfully disorienting, defiantly "unprofessional" mess in which everything seems possible. And no, it's not "quirky" like They Might Be Giants or some such atrocity, because every little sound is drenched in what we are still forced, for want of a word that isn't part of the vocabulary of the Christian Motivation Seminar, to call "attitude".

But even if the music was total shit, *Pud* (rhymes with "cud", not "should") would still tower over lots of other things, because like Manic Street Preachers (and the nominations for the "most unlikely comparison" section of next year's media awards are now closed) the Axemen deal with the band as cultural artefact. Not in anything like the hopelessly naive sociology-of-subculture sense, just in the way so much of their appeal comes from the sumptuous 14 page booklet accompanying the album, from the idea of this almost masonic secret-band-society drinking old dogs and children and watermelon wine ("First carefully peel the dogs..."), laughing at the outside world and reveling in being hated by Colin Hogg.

50,000 marks off for whistling, though.  
MATTHEW HYLAND

## K.D. LANG *Ingenué* (Sire) ANNIE LENNOX *Diva* (RCA)

What's in an album title? Annie Lennox's boasts vocal pretensions, while k.d. lang would have us regard her as artless.

Lang, at least, is surely being ironic. Firstly she is a writer of considerable talent, as these 10 new songs attest. She also possesses one of the most beautiful and adaptable voices in modern music. Tagging her as 'country'

has long since become quite inadequate and *Ingenué* finds her adopting the style of a sensual, frequently forlorn torch singer.

The songs are virtually all slow-paced with — in total disregard for the conventions of album programming — the fastest kept till last. (And it's the only time the drummer uses sticks). The arrangements include subtle shadings from the likes of cello, clarinet and vibraphone as well as the more expected lap steel guitar and piano.

In such low-key settings, success relies heavily on the qualities of song and singer. And although there's not one poor track here, some songs are considerably stronger than others. Ms lang's voice, however, despite its restraint throughout, is invariably wondrous.

In contrast to k.d. lang, Annie Lennox has always recorded with up-to-the-minute electronic instrumentation. She continues to do so on her first solo album, undercutting any lingering misconceptions that it was just Dave Stewart who controlled the Eurythmics sound. Apart from a one-joke throwaway (the final track) all the material on *Diva* is original and a good half of the album is very good indeed.

It's the uptempo tracks that are the disappointments. Adopting stances in electro pop and soul such numbers as 'Walking On Broken Glass', 'Legend In My Living Room' and 'Little Bird' are catchy enough, but too similar to

countless other entries in the field.

But on the slower stuff Annie's unique qualities really shine. The ballad 'Why' is straight-out gorgeous and superbly sung. 'Money Can't Buy It' is all slinky funk that builds to an impassioned climax. Perhaps best of the lot is 'The Gift'. Co-written with The Blue Nile, the track is typical of their sparse '3am and alone with the rain trickling down the window' sort of mood. Lennox's cool vocal is so perfectly matched that one hopes they'll do a whole album together sometime.

So if *Diva* seems a rather grandiose title for this album at least the best tracks suggest that the term is not too far-fetched. Annie Lennox has made an auspicious start to her solo career.  
PETER THOMSON

## GARY MOORE *After Hours* (Virgin)

In 1990 Gary Moore decided to take a gamble and do something he'd always wanted to do — make an entire album of blues tunes and ask some of his favourite players (Albert King and Albert Collins) to guest. He was genuinely suprised when *Still Got The Blues* became his most successful album of a musical career which spans 20 years, through Thin Lizzy, Colosseum, G Force and several solo recordings. Now it seems Gary has opted to abandon fret burning hard rock for his love of the good old blues.

Basically *After Hours* is a straight continuation of what he began last

time, though it's perhaps even more traditional sounding in guitar approach and with more horn section back-up. Rollicking upbeat numbers like the first single 'Cold Day In Hell' and the duet with BB King 'Since I Met You Baby' contrast well against the sheer smoothness of 'Separate Ways' and 'Story of the Blues'. Gary has complete command of his instrument and can evoke a lot of feeling so naturally into the music although the same cannot be said for his singing voice ('Nothing's The Same' would have been better as an instrumental). Albert Collins once again lends a hand and one of the few covers is a ripping run-through of Mayall's 'Key To Love'. *After Hours* is a slick follow-up that confirms how comfortable Moore is to simply just play the blues.  
GEOFF DUNN

## LILS *Lodestone* (Failsafe)

Soft-core indie guitar rock from this Christchurch four piece who relocated to Auckland. The Lils write songs with words that suggest experiences deeply felt and carefully mulled into music. Quietly intense, they never really take the reins off their guitars, but they do sustain a mood through 13 carefully constructed songs. Shades of the Only Ones, the Clean, and — on 'Falling In And Out' — an accelerated Joy Division, although not as gloomy as that, the Lils are never self-indulgent or melodramatic.

*Lodestone* does suffer from a certain homogeneity of style and mood and they save their best song for last. 'Hide' is a mesmerising acoustic track, one of the best local songs I've heard on BFM this year, simple harmonies and tender sentiments perfectly attuned to a haunting melody. Perhaps if they had attempted slightly fewer than the 13 tracks on *Lodestone* we would have been treated to a few more songs as exceptional as this.  
DONNA YUZWALK

## THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS *Apollo 18* (Elektra)

A fourth album from John Linnell and John Fiansburg heralds another feast of quirky vignettes, brief oddball snapshots, slices of life and lunacy. This

time divided into 18 ideas shaped as songs, 17 more ideas than most bands.

On '1 Palindrome I', 'The Statue Got Me High' and 'Dinner Bell' humour and perfect pop collide and although humour is their serious weapon of dissection, they also like knocking out pure spoofs like 'Spider' and 'Hall of Heads'.

They might be giants, but they ain't midgets as *Apollo 18* shows how they continue to tease, be indecisive, ludicrous and turn lyrics and song structures to their own imperfect ends. You might love them.  
GEORGE KAY

## THE HOLY TOLEDOS *Forget and Forgive* (Failsafe)

The Holy Toledos got together as school friends in Christchurch in 1989 and their youth is evident in the classic bedroom-anst lyrics and vocal style of lead singer / songwriter Michael Gregg.

Songs about wanting people back or not wanting them back, songs about uncertainty, disappointment, hope and hopelessness, but the music doesn't quite meet the wintry drama of the lyrics head on. The cover photography is reminiscent of the Jesus and Mary Chain's portraits on their collected singles LP, but the Holy Toledos are more restrained and tasteful than the Mary Chain, guitars only go off memorably at the end of one song, 'Anything', which also gives most effective expression to fear of living due to disillusionment incurred so far. One thinks of Bread and Leonard Cohen and U2, that's the emotional terrain these young men are treading, but they are dragging their heels in the melody department, and one song slips rather too indistinctly into the next.

Still, the Holy Toledos inhabit their own poetic universe and they're not afraid to be unhappy in public. For that they should be praised.  
DONNA YUZWALK

## SPINAL TAP *Break Like The Wind* (MCA)

This album is totally ridiculous. Yes, the metal movie legends have disgraced the recorded medium. *Break Like The Wind* is a celebration of all that is comical in the world of Heavy

Metal, strung together by surprisingly good playing by Tufnel, Hubbins and Smalls.

The frightening thing about this record is that one could quite imagine hearing these songs on a supposedly serious rock release. 'Bitch School' has the required dose of sexism, while 'The Majesty of Rock' with its pseudo-orchestral arrangement could have been on a Queen record. 'Christmas With The Devil' is a yuletide romp through hell: "The elves are dressed in leather and the angels are in chains". Spinal Tap can be congratulated for the fact that they have actually found a record company that wants to release their records. This 14-song opus shows the signs of a group that have waited long for their time in the spotlight. Well, doesn't that sound like the Tap.

Everything about them is mockery. Check out the hilarious self-portraits on the inside cover. If you're starting a heavy metal band don't feel embarrassed when you see how similar your lyrics are to those of Spinal Tap. They are the true grandfathers of heavy metal.  
LUKE CASEY

## SMASHING PUMPKINS *Lull* (Caroline)

This is an interesting little morsel from one of the most interesting indie bands to come out of the States in the past two years. The Pumpkins combine the atmospheric lushness of the Cocteau Twins with the big rock firepower of Jane's Addiction. They even manage to come up with some nice melodies as well.

This EP is one for either diehard fans or those new to the group. 'Rhinoceros', by far one of the coolest tracks from their LP *Gish* is included, as are two others from those particular sessions. The only throwaway is 'Bye June' where the trademark kindergarten vocal line gets a touch too soppy. This track can only be categorised under 'filler'.

An appetiser is a good description of this release. One would be well advised to skip this on the shelves, however, and reach straight for their wonderful album.  
LUKE CASEY

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