

first album, 'She's Leaving Me Because She Really Wants To' does a deft backflip on a common theme, while 'North Dakota' and 'Family Reserve' lead a solid set of quieter songs.

**KEVIN NORQUAY**

**JOE COCKER**  
*Night Calls (Liberation)*  
**LEON RUSSELL**

**Anything Can Happen (Virgin)**  
Twenty-odd years ago these two old farts were the mainmen in Mad Dogs and Englishmen, for a while considered to be about the hottest live act on the planet. Leon organised the big loose band while Joe was out front bellowing and flailing his arms about. After that their paths diverged. The band leader established himself as a solo artist and made a fortune watching some of his songs become huge hits when recorded by the likes of George Benson and the Carpenters. Cocker capitalized on his initial great Beatles cover version and carved himself a niche as soulful interpreter of rock songwriting.

Over the past decade, while Joe Cocker has been plugging on, Leon Russell is in retirement. And if *Anything Can Happen* is the best he can come up with after all that time then his songwriting skills are seriously shot. Those of us who love large chunks of those early 70s albums won't find much to celebrate here. Little beyond Russell's voice — itself an acquired taste — and one of his typically snoozy ballads called 'Faces of the Children'. Probably the only track a non-afficionado would enjoy is the funny, electro-woodoo reworking of Chuck Berry's 'Too Much Monkey Business'. Choosing songs by other rockers to cover is fraught with danger. If the new version doesn't turn out either better or significantly different then it is a pointless exercise.

Where Leon Russell can surprise us with his Chuck Berry remake, Joe Cocker just goes on being himself. Hence reactions to the performance on *Night Calls* tend to depend simply on our affection for the originals. Hence I can accept this 'Don't Let The Sun Go Down On Me' (also featured on the recent *Two Rooms* tribute) because I don't like Elton

John's voice. I enjoy Joe's 'Can't Find My Way Home' because I've always thought Blind Faith's instrumental work undermined an otherwise good song. I love the slow, slinky 'Five Women' but then I don't know of any Prince version. And so on through the album.

The only thing about *Night Calls* which does surprise is the Beatles cover, 'You've Got To Hide Your Love Away' is such a blatant attempt to retrace Joe's 'Little Help From My Friends' approach — the same slowed down rhythm, beefed up arrangement and OTT delivery — that it surely must be intended as a joke. Not a good one though. All it demonstrates is that to revisit the past you always need a fresh perspective.

**PETER THOMSON**

**CABARET VOLTAIRE**  
*Technology: Western Re-Works 1992 (Virgin)*

That's new remixes to you and me. It's a dodgy concept since the point of later Cabs' songs was melody, not rhythm. Sure, the tune was caught between the beats like a pedestrian between two colliding buses but it was there, a hum-a-long twang in 'Just Fascination' or a soaring, inspirational hum-a-long twang in 'Sensoria'. Sometimes the tunes were so lost even members Kirk and Mallinder couldn't find them; all however emerged resplendent on a series of 12" single mixes that date back to 1981's seminal 'Slugging for Jesus', the B-side of which was the A-side played backwards.

Now it's the 90s and the Cabs haven't done so much so... we get them remixed again. Silly because old fans retain and treasure their originals — along with a few Killing Joke singles and a Birthday Party EP no doubt — and the new potential audience is still dizzy from sniffing the glue that is 808 State and, let's face it, Jesus Jones.

In the space of some 40 minutes... not very much happens. The trademark Cabs sound is boiled mercilessly down to something between late Depeche Mode and a doorbell. Ever fashionable, the 808 lads do turn up in fact to remix 'I Want You' and prove they can do wrong. The rest is *reductio ad absurdum*.

Which means: you don't speak Latin. Capiche?

**CHAD TAYLOR**

**STONED ALCHEMY**  
*Various (Instant)*

Subtitled '27 original blues and R&B hits that inspired the Rolling Stones' this compilation is a valuable addition to any Stones fanatic's collection.

In today's climate of obsession with original material as a pre-requisite for credibility, it's worth recalling that the Rolling Stone's began as a covers band. In their initial two years of recording they released 43 copies or reworkings of other artists' material (those first two albums contained nine covers apiece).

*Stoned Alchemy*, while hardly exhaustive, presents a focussed and fascinating viewpoint from which to evaluate the Stones' early development. It's easy to see where they simply copied (as on 'Down the Road Apiece') or cannily re-arranged ('Come Out'). Or even where they simply failed through insufficient skills (compare Jagger's attempt at

'You Can Make It If You Try' with Gene Allison's).

Not that the Stones' versions were always inferior. Far from it. Only the most curmudgeonly purist would deny that the Stones' treatments of 'Little Red Rooster' and 'It's All Over Now' cut the originals by Howlin' Wolf and Bobby Womack.

The only reservation about *Stoned Alchemy* concerns marketing. Despite its excellent, detailed liner notes by NME's Roy Carr, with over half the tracks drawn from Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Muddy Waters, won't most serious Stones fans own the bulk of this stuff already? Will they want to fork out full price for a minority of less available tracks by the likes of Alvin Robinson and Buster Brown?

Whatever the marketing strategy it can't be as shrewd as that of the Stones themselves. Throughout their first few years they swatted up these songs, recorded them and then had phenomenal success selling back to the Americans their own music.

**PETER THOMSON**

## DANCEFLOOR

**ERIC B & RAKIM**

*Don't Sweat The Technique (US MCA 12")*

These guys are definitely on a roll at the moment. After the fantastic 'Juice', comes this brilliant jazz-funk styled record with seven mixes, ranging from the club-friendly eight minutes of the Funky Ginger Mix to Rakim's own, purer album and extended mixes. An essential record.

**SIMONE**

*Hey Fellas (US Strictly Rhythm 12")*

The follow-up to the club hit 'My Family Depends On Me', this is another similar socially aware garage/ soul record aimed at the sort of dickheads who feel the need to hassle women in the street. A cool record that sticks in your head after a couple of plays. UDG On Yer Todd (White Label) A faithful tribute to Todd Terry, in the master's recent style, from the north of England. The Todd influence gets less and less as the track goes on, sounding like UDG started with one idea and moved on from there.

**HOUSE OF PAIN**

*Jump Around (US Tommy Boy 12")*

Produced by Muggs, this tough track is based around a screeching sex loop that would've done early PE proud. Too hard to cross over, this is still cool.

**THE DAOU**

*Surrender Yourself (US Columbia 12")*

Current cool name is NY DJ Danny Tenaglia who's done wonders with this track (check out the album mix on the flip). The remix is built around a massively hypnotic vibe and keyboard loop with a sort of spoken vocal. It's hard to imagine, but really this is amazing stuff.

**TITO PUENTE**

*Para Los Rumberos/ Ran Kan Kan (US Elektra 12")*

Two tracks from the Latin dance king, remixed to hell by the Masters at Work (Little Louie Vega and Kenny Gonzalez). The flip side came out on UK 12" some months back and has been huge at the Box, but the A is as much a Latin-tinged percussive masterpiece, especially on its vibe mix. If your dancefloor won't work to this you shouldn't be a DJ.

**SHUT UP AND DANCE**

*Death Is Not The End (UK SUAD CD)*

God I love these guys, in spite of their lousy graphics. Inside this disc you get a slip advertising their t-shirts etc, but would anybody really wear a logo like that? This album is predictably weird, predictably brilliant and anything but predictable. The album version of the hard 'Crackhead' single is semi-acoustic with Dexy's Kevin Rowland on guitar and 'Pure White Black Life' is the kind of soul ballad that wouldn't be out of place on a Tashan album. I really like the warped remake of Mr Fingers 'Can You Feel It' on 'Blue Colour Climax'. Genius at work! Plus they sample Spiit Enz!

**LITTLE LOUIS**

*Club Lonely (US Epic 12")*

Nothing to do with the Masters at Work, this little Louis is the guy who had a top 10 crossover with the hypnotic and influential 'French Kiss' in 90 and followed it with one of that year's best albums. This is in the same style, just as hypnotic and one that grows and grows. Check out the dubs. If you can't get into this you're deaf.

**SABRINA JOHNSTON**

*I Wanna Sing (UK East West 12")*

The promo of this comes in a double-pack with a multitude of mixes and dubs, but the best is still the 12" club mix on side one from CJ Mackintosh. This is a sparse mid-tempo garage groove that stands on its own simplicity and the strength of the song. It's also 12 minutes long. How come all these records are so long these days?

**GOVERNMENT**

*Music (US Bottom Line 12")*

This is simply a joyous club groove, nothing more, nothing less and typically New York. A nice deep organ riff with a jazz-funk feel, over a tough rhythm loop with a couple of well selected vocal samples. The NY indies churn these sort of things out by the dozen, but each and every one of them has more going for it than every swingbeat toytown record released to date.

**PETE ROCK & CL SMOOTH**

*Mecca And The Soul Brother (US Elektra CD)*

**GANG STARR**

*Daily Operation (US Cooltempo CD)*

These two albums are on constant high rotate in my car, the very two essential hip hop discs of the month. Of the two, the Pete Rock album is the most conventional, but it also has the best dance grooves, like the funky 'Soul Brother No 1' or 'Wig Out', with its sparse metallic drum loop. Gang Starr's reminds me a bit of early EPMD, but it's just so damn cool. Check out the wicked 'Take It Personal'. Shit, check out any track on these two monster albums.

**PRINCE**

*Sexy Muthafucker (US Paisley Park 12")*

Every couple of years, in spite of a run of decidedly average records, Prince seems able to come up with an absolute gem (the last was 'Gett Off') and this track, taken from the new double album and never destined for daytime radio, is the latest. You can almost see the wicked gleam in his eyes as the guys sing the chorus line to this sparse jazz-funk rap thang that could easily have come from the *Black Album*. A hit, I hope.

**SIMON GRIGG**

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