

RECORDINGS

NEW ZEALAND

BAILTER SPACE

The Aim
(Flying Nun EP)

The infinite and ineffable imbecility (copyright Ezra Pound, 1917) of major label "alternative" departments is an a priori scientific fact, but it looks like just for once the sad little men in the big high building have got their shit together, because rumour more or less insists that Bailter Space are about to take over the English-speaking world and America as well. So this must be some sort of parting gift: a four song EP sumptuously packaged in a luminous blue photograph by John Halvorsen. 'The Aim' is a re-write of 'Our Aim' from *Nelsh Bailter Space*, 'Shine' sees spectral samples infiltrating the usual heavenly host of guitars, and 'We Know' and 'Unseen' exude the same abstract-political rage that powered 'The State' on Thermos.

Send them victorious et cetera ...

MATTHEW HYLAND

3DS

Outer Space/Baby's On Fire (Flying Nun)

All the elements that make the 3Ds wonderful are rolled into one perfect pop song — big, bad guitars with a carousel lead line over the top, sing-song verses and a huge chorus, and dumb/fun lyrics. Some have said that this sounds like the Pixies, and maybe it does, but this is so much more alive, good humoured and real. Look out Black Francis. The B-side's cover of Brian Eno's 'Baby's On Fire' almost doesn't include the 3Ds trademarks — the guitars sit back as D Roughan's voice rides atop a driving bass and drums beat, providing the song's melodic through-line. The guitars are briefly unleashed, before they're pushed back — it's the restraint, the *suggsted* wildness, that makes this so cool.

JONATHAN KING

THESE WILDING WAYS

Set Love A Sail (Tall Poppy)

Three tracks, the title one could be These Wilding Ways answer to Rod's 'Sailing'. Well, it's not that good but it's pretty and limp. 'Carousel' kicks off with a Jesus Jones type busy beginning but soon kicks back (rather than butt), as does 'Precious Thing'. Well crafted, sincerely sung and all that jazz.

DONNA YUZWALK

STRAITJACKET FITS

Done

The long-awaited new recordings from SJF have followed up on the promise of recent live shows. 'Done', a stand-out live, opens the EP, driving guitar line and a vocal line that has Shayne Carter's voice leaping breath-takingly up and down the scale. 'Spacing' keeps up the 'quiet song' quotient, a big 'un' that starts restrained and builds to a big end. 'Solid' is kinda wierd in a kinda neat way. A mixed-back pretty vocal, over a quietly chaotic base... that is given free reign on 'White Out' — guitars, reverby explosions and venomous vocals (!). Wild. Andrew Brough's absence is filled with three times as much guitar, and Carter's voice works three times as hard, covering ground that neither had walked before. All through the record the guitars are roaming free, noisy lines weave texture into the songs, over some often subtly preverse drumming. At first it's hard to relate to this as a Straitjacket Fits recording — it's certainly not another *Life In One Chord* EP — you almost feel as if you might have stumbled across demo recordings — just because of the freshness of the sound, and adventurous, unselfconscious, un-tied up singing and guitaring... an album that follows this path in songs and sounds could be awesome.

JONATHAN KING

THE EXPONENTS

Five Song CD (Polygram)

Wow, Jordan Luck looks like Malcolm McDowell in *A Clockwork Orange* on the cover of this special CD (with his signature on the back, yeah, right). But we know Jordan is really a nice person and he sounds nice here on songs from *Something Beginning With C* like 'Who Loves Who The Most' and 'Sink Like A Stone'. Also, 'Interesting Thing', 'Close' and a song called 'Fuck' which is not another word for 'Erotic'.

DONNA YUZWALK

• **RONNY JORDEN**
• **The Antidote** (Island)
• **YOUNG DISCIPLES**
• **Road To Freedom** (Phonogram)
• **RE-BIRTH OF COOL** (4th & Broadway)
It's just as well Miles Davis didn't live to hear *The Antidote*. If he had it would have been a shock to the system, hearing how unbelievably off-track he went with 'Doo-Bob'. Ronny Jordan has mastered a mix of jazz and dance that leaves you wondering how they ever did without each other. He's taken the delicate side of hip-hop, as opposed to the jarring drum machine pop of *Easy Mo Bee* and drenched it in silken jazz standards. Though the single 'Get To Grips' is never bettered in terms of accessibility, it's a good indication of what you're in for.

The Young Disciples have created an entire album that has you reaching for superlatives. *Road To Freedom* must surely be one of the most outstanding works to come from the Brit soul renaissance, instantly comparable to Massive Attack's *Blue Lines*. Their mix of minimalist low tempo soul, rap and jazz sounds so effortless that the groovescape go beyond mere music into an atmosphere of liberation. Tracks like 'Apparently Nothing' attest the intention to better their influences with vocalist Carleen Anderson soaring over funky seventies piano and bass. The smouldering, jazzy 'As We Come (To Be)' proves them as versatile as they are sultry. The Disciples' road to freedom is definitely one worth taking, especially with all this breathtaking musical scenery en route.

Unfortunately neither of the above artists fit into commercial radio formats and as usual people are less likely to dive head first into albums they've never been exposed to. *The Re-birth of Cool* is a solution — fourteen tracks from the jazz/hip-hop/soul and rap genres — which satisfies both the uninitiated and the cognoscenti. Unlike their throwaway dance counterparts, the *Re-birth* compilation is both thorough in its inclusion of neo-classics and confident enough to include the new wave of fusionists. Mica Paris provides her timeless 'I Should've Known Better', the Dream Warriors and Gang Star team up and typify the 'jazzy rap' style and experimentalists Galliano show us a possible future. It's all aeons away from the robotic hammering of techno, just as Miles was aeons away from big bands in the 40s — a re-birth of cool it most certainly is.

JOHN TAITE

• **SNEAKY FEELINGS**
• **Send You** (Flying Nun)
The Sneaky Feelings role in the scheme of things has always been

badly undervalued. Quite how they failed to make the *Flying Nun Getting Older* retrospective compilation is beyond me. However, in a recent radio interview Matthew Bannister said they were "giving the world another chance" by re-issuing this, their 1984 debut on CD. Hopefully those people in the world who have not yet experienced the earthly delights of the Sneakies via *Sentimental Education* or *Hard Love Stories* will at least check out this classic album which captures the Dunedin four piece at its finest. From 'Waiting for Touchdown' through 'Someone Else's Eyes', 'PIT Song' and 'Not To Take Sides' there is not a single dud filler track.

Also included are three new songs (two by David Pine, one by Martin Durrant) recorded in 1990. These do seem a little out of place in such company but they were only intended to be bonus tracks and perhaps should be viewed as such.

ALISTER CAIN

CURVE

Horror Head 12" (Anxious)

The TVEM darlings now available in a special vinyl (vinyl!) format. At least three melodies crawling over each other in 'Horror Head': a 60s gist, Cocteau Twins vocals and some seriously lush riffing. Probably a determinedly "alternative" bunch of kids and there is abrasion at its kernel but everything outside is as sweet and sticky as pop gets. Curve are indulgent to the point where they might start making something else but in the meantime this will do nicely. Does anyone else find the singer looks like Gary Numan? Answers on the back of a postcard...

Chad Taylor

THESE WILDING WAYS

Paul (Tall Poppy)

Several years on from the Screaming Meemees singer / songwriter / guitarist Michael O'Neill has gone back into the studio with another band, some of whom would be too young to remember the Meemees or to have seen them live.

As an album *Paul* has a solo quality: private, confessional lyrics contrasting with the populist, straight-to-high-rotate songwriting knack which O'Neill has demonstrated since the days of 'Pointy Ears'. The latest single 'Set Love A Sail' is the Ronson ballad Bryan Adams would kill for. 'House of Cards' and 'Burns Like Fire' enjoy a similar potential. The CD's contents match the singles which are neither flukes or standouts in a consistent body of work.

Producer Mark Tierney has contributed what is becoming his own trademark style: straight up with a twist. The canny grafting of a Manchester beat onto 'Take My Hand' and that single's success are evi-



THE MUTTONBIRDS

(Bag Records)

Talk about yer extended musical foreplay. The Muttonbirds have teased us with the likes of 'Dominion Road' and 'White Valiant' for months now (I seem to have grown old with these tunes). Finally, after the industry-standard delays and false starts, the album has hit the streets. And the wait has been worth it, for their eponymous debut is indeed a cracker.

Ex-Blam Blam Blam and Front Lawn man Don McGlashan and cohorts kick things off in rousing fashion with the single, 'Dominion Road'. Unless you've spent a lot of time blindfolded and earplugged in a flotation tank recently, you should already have heard this song. If not, seek out your local radio programmer and slap them about the face with a copy, as it has all the hallmarks of a bonafide NZ classic.

For the Muttonbirds' album McGlashan has eschewed the experimentalism of the Front Lawn, adopting a traditional pop format rooted in the early 60s. That's not to say it's overly derivative, as McGlashan provides his own musical twist to proceedings and concerns himself lyrically with the peculiarities of the New Zealand condition. Snapshots of Kiwiana abound — a morning walk through Forest Hill, a friend returning changed from their OE; rainy evenings with nothing to do but sit indoors, mindlessly watching the telly.

And there's no trouble hearing these tales, as the strong vocals are given plenty of room in the mix. The overall sound is distinctly low-fi, the songs being a mixture of 16 track and overdubbed practice room recordings. At its best the clarity of the production provides a sparkling insight into the songs. At its worst it leaves a few tracks, such as 'Big Fish' and 'Giant Friend' struggling to maintain their momentum and sounding rather thin.

Minor quibbles aside, the quality of the songs, in particular 'Dominion Road', 'Your Window' and 'White Valiant', win through. There's even an inspired cover of the old Fourmyla track 'Nature' as a final nod to the 60s.

The Muttonbirds have all the local flavour of a kiwifruit pavlova and are twice as tasty. Enjoy.

MARTIN BELL

dence that O'Neill's songs bloom with a bit of lateral-thinking production.

It's this professionalism behind the desk and the mike (sic) that could obscure the Wildings' priorities as a new band. Debuting before an "uneducated" audience they face the same uphill odds as Push Push yet lack the steadier profile enjoyed by the Exponents. An old hand at this game, O'Neill must be frustrated by the situation.

The challenge for These Wilding Ways now is to build the following that is usually well-established by the time an artist reaches this level. Meanwhile *Paul's* aim is true: the band have targeted a smooth, mature school of pop music and bagged it first time.

CHAD TAYLOR

MORRISSEY

Your Arsenal (EMI)

Steven Patrick Morrissey is not the easiest of people to figure out. His last three solo albums lacked the

confidence and musical mastery of his former glory — both of which were kind of essential to lighten his lyrics and appeal to the less fanatical. But with *Your Arsenal*, well, it's an outstanding album, accomplished, rounded in content and focused. And with his backing band finally established, Morrissey is actually sounding, dare I say it, happy.

The crisp production from Mick Spiders from Mars Ronson, focuses on the overdriven guitar and flailing vocals of 'Someone on your Side' and 'Glamorous Glue' but this isn't the glam rock expedition it was rumoured to be. Delicate, semi-acoustic songs like 'We'll Let You Know' and 'Seasick Yet Still Docked' conjure fond memories of the 'Back To The Old House' type Smiths lament. The rockabilly rhythm and amusing lead guitar of 'People I Know' sees Steven in a 'Frankly Mr Shankly' frame of mind with its soaring spirals and wry expressions. It's the type of tune I'd given up all hope of hearing again.

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