



Recoil

they ever intended to. *Mind Fruit* proves they're perfectly happy with variations of a theme (they are on Pete Waterman's label, after all).

Track after track we hear Kristy's innocent vocals, pulsing basslines and airy synth melodies — delicate and breezy one minute, delicate and pacey the next. Which is all very well as long as you keep in mind the word 'moderation'. An overdose of their light fluffiness would prove soul destroying for even the most devoted techno pop fan.

JOHN TAITE

#### DISMEMBER Pieces (Nuclear Blast)

A four track CD from death metal group Dismember, part of a whole group of releases that will soon be available because of those nice chaps down at Ima Hitt records in New Plymouth who have arranged to distribute the Nuclear Blast label in New Zealand. This particular release features one of the most horrific cover shots I've seen for a while. All five band members with their heads decapitated. Still, I don't suppose they'd put a little fluffy lamb on the cover. The music is fairly generic death metal and will only interest the genuine collector. Let's hope future Nuclear Blast imports are more challenging. Keep your eyes open.

LUKE CASEY

#### OLIVIA NEWTON-JOHN Back To Basics (Festival)

A decade before Kylie there was Ollie. Both Aussies, similar voices (well, maybe not quite so 'budgie on helium' as Kylie but just as devoid of depth). Anybody with any taste despised her; anybody who didn't had none.

But then something happened, almost a metamorphosis. Some say it began with her role in *Grease* but I'd argue it was 1981's *Physical*: a new image and a terrific new album with its title track the most brilliant pop single of the new decade.

Suddenly Ollie was hot and she became the first princess of the pop video. People even began to acknowledge that perhaps there were one or two pre-*Physical* songs which were OK too. More good singles followed 'Physical' (and not only from the album) but everything stopped after 85's torrid *Soul Kiss*.

*Back To Basics* is subtitled *The Essential Collection 1971-1992* and although containing a generous 21 tracks still falls somewhat short of its claim. The first four tracks are brand new — to ensure that the completist fan must purchase — and while competent and respectable, at most only one might be reasonably regarded as belonging with Ollie's best. There's also the inevitable large dollop of the dire drivel she

recorded during the 70s. What this means is that at least three or four neat eighties tracks (for instance 'Tied Up' and 'Heart Attack') are left off. So not the perfect compilation it could have been but not bad either.

Ollie's well into her 40s now and, as she sings on the album's first new track, "holding out for something more than physical". Maybe she's got a future again.

PETER THOMSON

#### RECOIL Bloodline (Mute)

It's taken him two albums and god knows how many years to get it right but who cares. By inviting a handful of guest vocalists, Alan Wilder's electro outfit Recoil has finally moved in a more approachable and relevant direction. *Bloodline* is a chameleon, varying in pace and atmosphere with each of the four singers involved. Nitzer Ebb's Douglas McCarthy adds his darker, more industrial influence on 'The Faith Healer' (a cover of rock dinosaur Alex Harvey's track). And despite rather huge genre jumping, 'Curse' provides a credible electro-based background to the (very politically correct) rap of Moby.

It's Toni Halliday though that produces the album's stunner. Her depth of performance on the title track finally crushes the "Annie Lennox of the 90s" title she's picked up from Curve. Pervading beats, erratic synth crashes, tempting whispers, distorted wails and a climactic chorus of "you just never ever get what you want". It's a breathtaking highlight.

Not every track works. The experimental 'Electro Blues for Bukka White' drags on for far too long (about 7.46 too long to be exact) and Wilder's two instrumentals sound too absent and clinical. But overall *Bloodline* has moved Recoil from the easily dismissed to the essential.

JOHN TAITE

#### WILSON PHILLIPS Shadows and Light (EMI)

Let's ignore the political issues here — like how come a sleeve photo taken at the beach shows the two slim ones frolicking in their bikinis while the fat one stays wrapped in her dressing gown — and get straight to the burning musical question: is

there anything on this album as good as the last one's 'Hold On?' (It was that track, after all, which took Wilson Phillips from being merely a gimmick group with famous dads to gaining their own valid entry into girl-group heaven).

Well the answer is definitely "no" but that probably won't stop the album yielding up at least a couple of hit singles. With a snappy video clip — especially if it features the heartstopping Chynna — either 'Give It Up' or 'Fuelled For Houston' could, ahem, 'rock' up the charts. Then again 'This Doesn't Have To Be Love' or 'Flesh And Blood' could do well in the soppy ballad stakes.

One at a time these tracks are rather pleasant but the album's overall effect is mind-numbing. The sound is so relentlessly layered and glossed that you want to scratch away at its surface to let some humanity out. As it is, the most interesting things about *Shadows and Light* are extra-musical. For example:

Item One: the Wilson sisters' 'Flesh and Blood' is a letter to Brian and might seem like a pretty hokey exploitation of the old man's condition were it not for the fact that getting this song played on the radio quite probably really is the best chance they have of communicating with him.

Item Two: Chynna Phillips' 'All the way from New York' adds a reconciliatory footnote to the saga of Papa John's drug-addled destruction of his family.

Item Three: 'Goodbye Carmen' may well be the only song ever written in which three wealthy Californian wasps bid farewell to their maid who is returning to Mexico. Ain't it comforting to know that Wilson Phillips are politically sensitive after all?

PETER THOMSON

#### LETHAL WEAPON 3 Movie Soundtrack (Reprise)

Michael Kamen knows a good dodge when he's found it. The scam is to churn out a crap instrumental score for a big budget movie, preferably one in a hit series such as James Bond or *Lethal Weapon*. Next, invite in a proven hitmaker with a loyal audience to provide one vocal number. Then release the guest artist's track with flash

videoclip tying it to the movie. Sit back and wait for the inevitable chart action. Not only do you collect your fee for scoring the movie but you cream in composing royalties everytime a fan of the guest pop star buys the album.

This time our Kamen's been extra smart by hooking up Sting with Eric Clapton for the single, thus doubling the market base. He's also got Elton John with Clapton for track two. Triple whammy!

Sting's 'It's Probably Me' is certainly as good or better than anything on his last album and Clapton plays beautifully. Elton's 'Runaway Train' is okay too because Clapton relieves him of some of the vocals. The rest of the album is Kamen's usual crap.

PETER THOMSON

#### GLENN FREY Strange Weather (MCA)

The last time I noticed Glenn Frey he was acting the part of a record producer on TV's *Wiseguy*. With Eagles royalties continuing to pour in I guess he can afford to dabble. His last solo album was four years ago so he can take his time about recording too.

In the interim, Frey wants us to know he's been doing some reading. Five tracks on this 65 minute album are dedicated to different authors (and not just the likes of Stephen King; Rachel Carson's there also). (Literary digression: the seductive 'A Walk In The Park' becomes the second ballad to be inspired by Anne Rice's *Interview With The Vampire*, Sting's 'Moon Over Bourbon Street' being the first).

Another ex-Eagle once wrote a song called 'Life's Been Good' but it was semi-ironic. Everything about this album conveys the impression that for Frey the statement is true. Tempos range from the luxuriantly slow to a mid-paced cruise and the musicianship is immaculately professional.

When he sings about a "long hot summer . . . everybody's crazy from the heat" you know from the cool, relaxed ambience that Frey's vantage point is one of air-conditioned comfort. The only time he gets worked up is when bemoaning his inability to pick up the women he fantasizes about at night-clubs.

*Strange Weather* presents the

smooth sound of a wealthy middle-aged man indulging his facility for creating sweetly pleasant AOR. And make no mistake, Glenn Frey is still very good at it. Over the summer months expect several tracks to be playing on an easy listening station near you.

PETER THOMSON

#### DANZIG III How The Gods Kill (Def American)

I dig Danzig's aesthetic consistency. From the HR Giger cover drawing to the way three of them sport black Jesus Christ beards to the lyrics, in which the word "black" is mentioned an awful lot. The music rolls like distant thunder while Glenn Danzig's Jim Morrison meets Elvis on a dark day in hell vocals wander all over the songs, talking about being lost, godless, asking if you 'wear the mark', celebrating a 'dirty black summer'. He produced this album himself so his vocals are mixed to the fore and the whole album seethes with his lonely, brooding, Heathcliffian spirit — ten songs later you've maybe had enough of his scuffling tenor, but not the music. The songs here don't rope you in as instantly as on *Lucifuge* but you won't get sick of them as quickly either: subdued, sullen intros crash into heavy rhythms, guitar/ bass catching you up in their slow grindin' wheels and dragging you along for the ride before Glenn's voice trails off vaporously. A jolly good time for the ghoulish at heart.

DONNA YUZWALK

#### RODNEY CROWELL Life Is Messy (Columbia) MARY-CHAPIN CARPENTER Come On Come On (Columbia)

A restatement of the obvious: much of the best songwriting these days is arriving courtesy of country. Anyone still requiring proof need check no further than the previous releases by Rodney Crowell (*Keys To The Highway*) and Mary-Chapin Carpenter (*Shooting Straight To The Dark*). Both albums are chock full of melodically haunting songs exploring adult emotional concerns with a clarity and astuteness rarely found in other branches of popular music. The fact that both albums were stunningly well performed didn't hurt either.

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