

RECORDINGS

NEW ZEALAND

FIGURE 60

Bludger

Figure 60 are an Auckland three piece with noisy guitar, bass, drums and dreamy vocal melodies. Somehow they've come to the conclusion that this makes them "totally original" and "owing nothing whatsoever to current musical trends." In fact I can count the local groups who *don't* sound a bit like them on the fingers of a closed fist, but that doesn't matter too much, 'cause out of all their contemporaries they come just about the closest getting the guitar to sound really like a molten lava flow, while for once the vocals actually do suggest langour instead of malnourishment and the rhythm section understands the value of open spaces. So they've proved that they can do the familiar better than properly; *Bludger* has a big, lush sound, especially for a demo recorded in a living room on an 8-track. Here's hoping they do their next one in a cathedral or a jungle or a sewer.

MATTHEW HYLAND

AXEMEN

Across The Universe in 3288 Days (Sleek Bott/ Frisbee)

Genuinely big deal — 1st official puntage of the Axemen's already-legendary Frisbee sessions! 4 songs, of which the epic mostly-instrumental 'Sputnik Stomp' is the truckin'-est (snake-charming oriental gtr lines, kettledrum thunder, 'Skinhead Moonstomp'-style ejaculations and much else). 'Sober Is A Judge' and Bob Brannigan's bird-flip to the New Age 'Stop Staring At Me W/ Yr 3rd Eye' are "normal rock songs" done right and 'NYCBC' is Burt Bacharach drunk on his ass and sniggering feverishly at nothing in some seedy bowling alley. Attention Axemen fans everywhere! I'm sure you'll both love it!

D. ZARAKOV

THE CHILLS

Double Summer (Flying Nun)

Martin's in love for summer and exhorting us to "share it with one another" on a somewhat featureless song from the album *Soft Bomb*. Also, two demos: 'Halo Fading' is standard acousticy jiggle; 'Sanctuary' is a socially aware song about a woman trapped in a violent marriage set to a Randy Newman-esque keyboard refrain which makes you listen out for the bite but this song is compassion itself.

DONNA YUZWALK

DIRTBOX

Complicity

Power pop with a cutting edge from this Auckland three-piece. Robert (who used to front Kaleidopops) plays guitar with verve but his singing style sounds like a collision between Fergal Sharkey and Jello Biafra — his vocal chords quiver like a plucked bow while delivering politically conscious lyrics with Biafran explosiveness. Some innovative BBC World Service samples on 'Revolution' and nifty guitar melodies on 'Candy Delight'. A solid nine song debut from a local band that avoids current Auckland rock cliches.

DONNA YUZWALK

TED BROWN

Swerve (Pagan)

There's something 70s sounding about this man's vocal chords, although he sounds more like Don McClean on the gentle B side 'Love Explodes' (soon to be covered by the Straw People) than on A side 'Swerve', which has a soft-footed hook that loops around and tugs you along quite pleasantly.

DONNA YUZWALK

REM

Automatic For The People (Warner Music)

Judging by the faces of Messrs Berry, Buck, Mills and Stipe on the gatefold sleeve there are precious few laughs to be had on their new album. Melancholy, stark, stripped back, monochromatic and at times (for REM) inaccessible, is the order of the day. The opening track 'Drive' seems to be going on a Sunday outing to nowhere in particular until a searing guitar line barges into the front seat and takes control of the wheel. Aided and abetted by the Atlanta Symphony Strings the song takes a new direction and reaches a powerful climax. 'Try Not To Breathe' echoes Cat Stevens' 'Peace Train' but remains classic REM.

From there, things begin to spiral down rather badly. The 'Sidewinder Sleeps Tonite' is a dumb pop song with the emphasis on dumb. 'Everybody Hurts' with 50s doo-wop style electric piano riff attempts to be a 'Rock 'n' Roll Suicide' for the 90s. Michael Stipe stretches his vocal mannerisms to the limit but the "you're not alone" lyrics are too cliched. If you have any interest in hearing what REM can come up with when they're running on empty at 2am then 'New Orleans Instrumental No 1' is for you. Personally, I wish the tape operator had forgotten to push the record button.

'Sweetness Follows' gets things back on track. With cello and severely feed-backing guitar underpinning the song as well as a powerful yet delicate vocal, a delicious atmosphere of loss, sorrow and hope is created. For REM, three out of six is not a good hit/ miss ratio on side one.

Things finally start rocking on

side two with 'Ignoreland'. Vocally and musically this track recalls some much earlier work of REM. Co-producer. Scott Litt pops up with some funky clavinet to help propel the sound along before Michael Stipe sweeps in, all deep-voiced lounge lizard for 'Star Me Kitten'. Listen to the last few lines and you'll hear the original title to this track.

On the next song REM answer that age-old question "Is Elvis alive on a dude ranch on Venus?" Of course not — he's supplying backing vocals on the simply wonderful 'Man On The Moon'. Beautifully accompanied by piano and oboe, Micheal Stipe is stripped bare (literally) and at his most poignant on the gorgeous 'Nightswimming'.

Undoubtedly this album finds REM charting a quieter, more reflective course and this track and the closing 'Find The River' get as close as anything on the album in helping them reach their goal. Wistful certainly — but also a tour-de-force. A strong triumvirate to finish on leaves this album feeling not so much Automatic as Erratic. REM may just have taken their contemplative ballad perspective to its logical conclusion on *Automatic For The People*. To paraphrase a sage rock and roll legend, it's now time they got back to where they once belonged.

MARTIN BELL

HUNTERS AND COLLECTORS

Cut (Mushroom)

SINGLE GUN THEORY

Like Stars in My Hands (Volition)

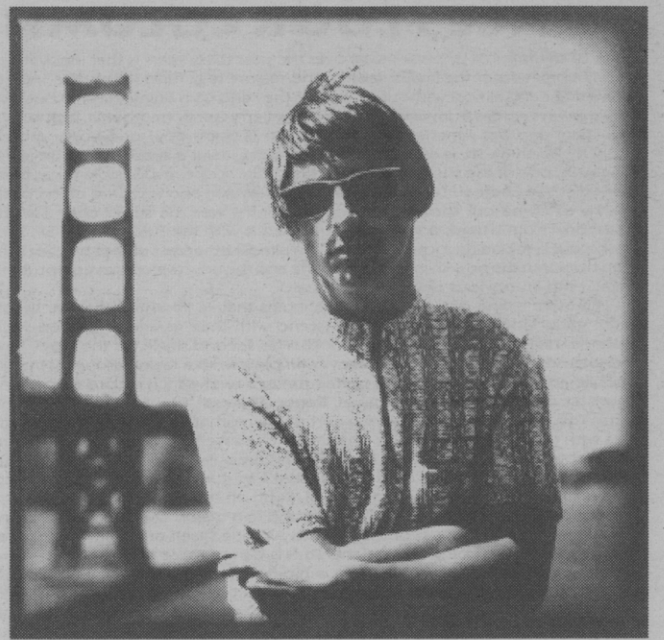
CHRIS WILSON

Landlocked (Aurora)

More odds n' sods from the land of Oz is headed by the staunch watchdogs of social justice, Hunters and Collectors who've developed a plan-



Stipe, Buck, Berry, Mills



PAUL WELLER

Paul Weller (Go! Discs)

There's always been a general feeling that Weller would've been wiser taking the Jam further into the eighties before he dropped the band for the sidewalk soul of the Style Council. With that change he'd not only shed his connection with his formative punk/ rock n' roll phase but also the considerable grassroots audience that went with it. The transition to the AOR and political subtleties were too radical and affected for even the most understanding Jam fan and despite mesmerising stuff like 'Long Hot Summer' and most of the *Our Favourite Shop* album, Weller and Talbot drifted to disposability with Polydor rejecting their fifth album.

So riding out a crisis in confidence Weller has returned with his first solo album, a low key soul-searching affair that embraces his talents as a craftsman with the ability to borrow from the best and yet make it his own. The single 'Uh-Huh-Oh-Yeh' is *Peppers* period Beatles minus the lavish trappings and maybe 'Bull-Rush' owes something to Steve Winwood and 'Clues' to Van Morrison, but who's counting?

The guts of the album is Weller sounding like good Style Council and without their daft name. The Talbot assisted 'The Strange Museum' is somewhere between 'Butterfly Collectors' and 'Long Hot Summer' but not quite as good as either. How could it be? 'Round and Round' and 'Above the Clouds' recreate that gossamer soul that almost justified the Jam's demise and his first solo single 'Into Tomorrow' lights a little guitar fire.

Paul Weller is an earnest, dedicated and mostly successful return to self-confidence. It's not in-yer-face or even twelve different versions of 'Eton Rifles', it's Paul Weller wrenching the best he can from a scene that has mistakenly rendered him redundant. This ain't *All Mod Cons* but it'll do for now.

GEORGE KAY

etary conscience to rival Midnight Oil's.

This sharpening of vision has led to a trimmer, harder and more focused seven piece with Palmer and Seymour's guitars dictating an edge that's derivative as hell but welcome for its diminished chest-beating heroics. The riff on 'Head Above Water' owes its shirt to the Kinks and 'Holy Grail' is the sound of Aussie armies marching to Boston's 'More Than A Feeling'.

All good strident stuff. In the ballad line Seymour guides the band through poignant, swelling brass indictments of apathy in 'Hear No Evil' and 'Edge of Nowhere' and cleansing, aching love songs in 'Tears of Joy' and 'Imaginary Girl'.

The impotent rage of 'We The People', an antidote to the usual

power-to-the-people chickenshit, shows how far this band has come down the defeated idealists road to cynicism/ realism. Ideologies aside, this is a rousing album, brave without being pompous. Power to the ahhh...

Totally unrelated other than through nationality is Single Sun Theory, a Sydney trio trying desperately to be different with their eastern flavoured, sample oriented cruising house music. With two keyboardists in tow and a bunch of smoothly grafted samples from street vocals and prayers in Kashmir and Istanbul, vocalist Jacqui Hunt takes care not to break the spell as she slides into the dreamy incantation groove of 'Angels Over Teheran', 'Take Me Back' and 'I Am What I See' — the pick of a very smooth

MUSICIANS

Join us for our unique one-year courses.

MUSIC PRODUCTION AND AUDIO ENGINEERING

CERTIFICATE

For careers in sound production, in the music industry, radio or television. Our brand new sound studios are air-conditioned and fitted with state-of-the-art equipment.

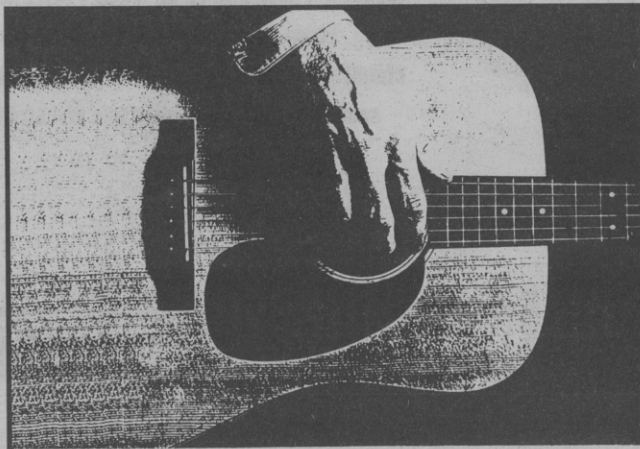
CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

CERTIFICATE

This one-year course offers training for performing musicians and includes music theory, promotion and technical production.

FREEPHONE 0800 800 411

Tai Poutini Polytechnic
Private Bag 607 Greymouth



MARTIN STRINGS

A Necessity, Not An Accessory

SOLE NZ DISTRIBUTOR

LYN McALLISTER MUSIC LTD
PO BOX 90014, AUCKLAND MAIL CENTRE
PH (09) 303 4936

ACME™

MERCHANDISE
NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND'S No.1 WHOLESALE
ROCK N' ROLL MERCHANDISING CO.

U2
PRINCE
TESTAMENT
GUNS N' ROSES
BON JOVI • TRIUMPH
ADDICTIVE • VAN HALEN
BODY COUNT • GRATEFUL DEAD
MEGADETH • ICE T
POISON • SEX PISTOLS
SLAYER • PINK FLOYD
SUN RECORD COMPANY
JANES ADDICTION
THE CLASH
PICASSO

HANNA-BARBERA

THE BROCKUM
COLLECTION®

THE CURE
BOB MARLEY
SOUNDGARDEN
COLD CHISEL • PEPSI
MOTLEY CRUE • AEROSMITH
FAITH NO MORE • CHEVROLET
CANDY HARLOTS • METALLICA
SCREAMING JETS • MIDNIGHT OIL
ALICE COOPER • MORTAL SIN
RADIO BIRDMAN • MASSAPPEAL
STOLICHNAYA VODKA
LOU REED • ANTHRAX
THE BLMIGHTY
FISHBONE
AC/DC

& MANY MORE TOP BANDS, ACTS & TRADEMARKS.

ACCENTED TO ROCK

PO BOX 56430 DOMINION RD AUCKLAND
TEL: 0-9-378 7731, FAX: 0-9-378 7732