

Not' for Leslie Kong, and covers the Studio One, Wail n'Soul and Lee Perry eras, finishing with the 1970 standard, 'Mr Brown'. The Wailers were hardest kinda rudies in these times, sexually knowing on 'Bend Down Low', challenging the oppressors on 'Small Axe' and 'Duppy Conqueror'. Recycling songs is a reggae tradition and those familiar only with the later versions of songs like 'Sun Is Shining' and 'Don't Rock the Boat' will be intrigued by the raw, less cluttered originals.

Disc Two runs from 1971-75, a period of turbulence and change. The Wailers were lured to the UK by Johnny Nash and manager Danny Sims to help record an album for Nash and with promises of bigger things to come. They were left high and dry, stone broke and miles from home. A chance meeting with Chris Blackwell brought them a deal with the fledgling Island records and the historic *Catch A Fire* sessions, when white musicians got their first real taste of reggae. Blackwell wanted Marley more upfront, which finally split the original trio and gave birth to a legend. Rare treats here include the sweetly sensual 'Lick Samba', a bit of rootsy finger-wagging in 'Craven Choke Puppy', a soulful ballad called 'High Tide Or Low Tide' which may have been destined for *Catch A Fire*, and especially an acoustic medley of seven songs recorded in a bedroom when Bob was apparently trying to teach some of his songs to Johnny Nash. Just as the solo version of 'Redemption Song' never fails to move me, this is equally affecting. Magic.

Disc Three, 1976-78, covers a busy time for reggae as a whole. Marley's *Natty Dread* album had seduced rock audiences and Britain's punks helped popularise other Jamaican artists like Burning Spear, Culture and the

Mighty Diamonds. The tracks here are from the *Rastaman Vibration*, *Exodus* and *Kaya* LPs, although we get alternate mixes, 12 inch versions and another live version of 'No Woman No Cry' as bonuses. Very welcome is the "tourist song" Marley wrote at the request of the Jamaican PM Michael Manley, 'Smile Jamaica'.

Disc Four incorporates tracks from *Survival*, *Uprising* and the posthumous *Confrontation*. By now Marley had established himself as a musical innovator, a red-hot live drawcard and a cultural ambassador. Occasionally there seems to be a weariness creeping into songs like 'So Much Trouble' and

'Bad Card'. He'd been to Africa, been hailed by the crowds, snubbed Prince Charles in Zimbabwe and discovered that many Ethiopians no longer revered Haile Selassie. Realising his mortal time was limited, his songs became more universal in their sentiments as he tried to convey the impressions he'd gained of the world from his lofty position. As the liner notes say here, he made one concession to commercial reality with 'Could You Be Loved' but although the Wailers sound as tough as ever, there's a contemplative air to these songs. Coupled with the effects of long tours and illness on his voice, Bob often sounds much older than the 35 he was when he made some of these last recordings. The disc closes with 'Redemption Song', recorded at his last-ever concert, with African drumming.

The single, 'Iron Lion Zion', is interesting for the fact that it exists, rather than for its quality. The song really isn't that great, considering that it comes from around the period that Marley was putting his own Wailers together and writing songs for *Natty Dread*. I'd guess



Mikey Dread

all that remains from the original recording is Bob's voice. The beat is US dancefloor (and it's charted well), while listeners seem more impressed with Courtney Plne's sax solo than with the rest of the recording.

With copious photos comes a succinct biography from Rob Partridge, former Island Records press officer, an essay from Timothy White, author of the biography *Catch A Fire*, on Marley's place in music, and some wonderful anecdotes from people who knew him. Derrick Morgan recalls Marley's first gig, Eric Clapton explains why he recorded 'I Shot The Sheriff', the single that helped reggae cross over to rock audiences, and best of all, keyboard player "Rabbit" Bundrick tells the hilarious story of the 1971 summer in Stockholm when the

Johnny Nash project fell to pieces, a gambler took all the money and the foundations were laid for *Catch A Fire*.

With the way cleared for more Marley back-catalogue releases, we can doubtless expect further quality product over the next decade. There are oodles of rare singles that deserve another airing. If they can give us the dub version of 'One Drop', then another JA-only product must be at the fingertips. Timothy White's book lists more than 20 unreleased tracks but there are so many sessions, so many obscure labels, that the Bob Marley Foundation should have plenty to occupy itself.

The sun is shining, the weather is sweet. Jah knows we've waited long enough for it this year. This collection will

cost you a bundle, but you won't regret it. You'll sing, you'll dance and at times your eyes will glaze over as you remember how much you miss the Tuff Gong.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL

MIKEY DREAD
Obsession
(Rykodisc)

Michael Campbell, aka Mikey Dread, made his name internationally with his toasting of the Clash's 'Bank Robber' after breaking new ground in Jamaica with his 'Dread At the Controls' radio programme which spawned his record label of the same name. Roots fans treasure his World War Three LP while UB40 aided his fame by releasing his *Pave The Way* album. He's drifted a little since then, with a series of forgettable releases on assorted labels. His trademark is a wheezy voice which sounds like three weeks of Asian flu.

It would be nice to report that *Obsessions* is a welcome return to form, but while on first listening it certainly skips along pleasantly, the sound starts to pale, especially when spread over 18 tracks. It could be cut in half and still make all the necessary points. The sound is late 80s—present day digital, the songs built on basic two-chord progressions, either in major key for lover's rock or minor key for songs with a message. The best shot is the opening track, 'Modern Africa', produced by Jah Shaka with a biting rhythm recalling his *Dub Symphony*. The rest is competent enough but has nothing new to say and I wish I could say more about such a long recording. Unfortunately I can't.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL

SUGAR
Copper Blue
(Creation)

As part of the legendary Minneapolis power trio Husker Du, Bob Mould helped litter the mid-eighties with a succession of molten guitar masterpieces. The band's split was less than amicable and the two songwriting Husker dudes, Mould and Grant Hart, involved themselves in introspective musical psycho-therapy. Hart on his solo album *Intolerance* and Mould through the gentle open-wound catharsis of *Workbook*. By the time of Mould's

follow up album, *Black Sheets of Rain*, it had turned into an intense exercise in picking at scabs.

Back as part of a power trio again, Bob's still pissed off but now he's enjoying being pissed off. Opening track 'The Act We Act' sets the exuberant tone for the rest of the album. 'A Good Idea' is pure Pixies pastiche with a great sinewy guitar line. 'Changes' rattles along in fine fashion, containing a very Husker Du-like skip-tempo break. Yet another rough pop diamond is up next, 'Helpless', before Bob gets a little weird on 'Hoover Dam', swapping electric guitar for a dubious 1970's synthesizer solo. 'The Slim' is a far darker and more menacing affair—a telling howl of rage about the death of a loved one. 'If I Can't Change Your Mind' washes through on a cleansing wave of acoustic guitars, recalling the hit that wasn't from *Workbook*, 'See A Little Light'. Mould displays his ability for writing the most gloriously simple throwaway guitar lines on 'Fortune Teller', whilst 'Slick' is probably *Copper Blue's* weakest moment but is still strong enough to be a first single for most other debutant bands. 'Man On The Moon' closes the album in cosmic (almost glam) style.

Through a new label, new attitude and new musical soulmates, Mould has uncovered a new aspect to his own brand of imploding guitar pop. Every song rates a mention in a list of *Copper Blue's* highlights and I defy anyone to skip a track when playing this album. Yep—it's that good.

MARTIN BELL

NEIL YOUNG
Harvest Moon
(Reprise)

Didn't he already do one called that? Was it, or was it not, that album I used to hate so much back in high school way-the-bejeezus back when? No OK, that one was just *Harvest* and retrospectively considered it wasn't entirely so awful, no *On The Beach* or *Tonight's The Night* but no James Taylor either... same I could say for the obj, in hand, tho' more specifically morphically similar to say *Old Ways* (1985) than *Harvest*, the same general feeling of a mellow number-for-the-road after a couple-3 platters of wrangling crazy horses on the bleak pla-

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