

the album and it's terrific. The one that takes place in a bar is called 'Last One Out' because the narrator realises, "Somehow I wound up with the keys".

Joe Henry is one fine wordsmith, the sort who can open a lyric confidently ordering, "Bring me the head of John the Baptist" yet close it with the rueful recognition that, "Everytime I catch a good song wouldn't you know — the station starts to fade."

Henry's sharply wrought observations of everyday crises and compromises are set to tunes which are serviceable at least, maddeningly haunting at best. His plaintive vocals are accompanied by a small group featuring violin, acoustic guitar or mandolin as lead instrument. It all has the casual warmth of a live performance. (Apparently the tracks were originally intended only as demos but everyone liked their feel too much to mess with them).

*Short Man's Room* is basically unpretentious folk-rock yet it's also one of those albums which are so refreshing to bump into and so rewarding to explore that you end up wanting to meet the guy who made it. Just like the remarkable cover painting it's an art that resonates well beyond its outward simplicity.

Joe Henry finishes his press release by saying that "he is survived daily by a wife and child". I'd just like to add that his album is one of the most endearing new releases I've heard this year.

**PETER THOMSON**

**JENNY MORRIS**  
*The Best of Jenny Morris*  
(Warner Music)

The best kind of *Best Of* is the one which, by astute selection of all the necessary tracks from the artist's catalogue, renders the prior albums obsolete. This one does that... and more!

Jenny Morris has always been a skilled, if erratic, song-



**Was Not Was**

writer. Along with, say, the terrific title track from 87's *Body and Soul*, came a fair whack of forgettable filler. Many of her best songs were co-written with such illustrious names as Andrew Farris, Paul Kelly and Tim Finn. Occasionally her partners would even contribute one of their own songs and it is to Morris's credit that she includes several fine examples here (for instance Farris's 'You're Gonna Get Hurt', Finn's 'You I Know' and Kelly's 'Street of Love').

But not only does this compilation scoop up everything you really need from Morris's three solo releases, it also includes some extra tracks which, for once, really are a bonus. 'Fear' has a similarly cool, percolating groove to her 89 hit 'Saved Me' (which here receives the addition of a very nifty brass section) and is as equally impressive a number. Furthermore, Morris has fun with a joyful cover of Nancy Sinatra's 'Jackson' (answering male vocal courtesy of Michael Hutchence) and relieves 'Piece of My Heart' of Janis Joplin's histrionics.

So trade in your old Jenny Morris albums for this definitive *Best Of*. *The Story So Far*

makes captivating listening.  
**PETER THOMSON**

**SIMPLE MINDS**  
*Glittering Prize*  
(Virgin)

**TALKING HEADS**  
*The Best of — Once In A Lifetime*  
(EMI)

**WAS NOT WAS**  
*Hello, Dad... I'm In Jail*  
(Fontana)

**HOODOO GURUS**  
*Electric Soup and Gorilla Biscuit*  
(BMG)

With yuletide creeping closer Santa's little helpers in record land have been compiling greatest hits to fill your stocking. First up is Simple Minds' retrospective 16 track *Glittering Prize*, a fairly thorough singles collection that traces their rise and fall. Ignoring their first three albums, this overview starts chronologically with the still sturdy 'Love Song' from *Sons and Fascination*, chronicles their peak *New Gold Dream* period with three songs including 'Promised You A Miracle', *Once Upon A Time's* 'Alive and Kicking' amongst others and *Street Fighting Years* 'Belfast Child' before closing in on last year's pretty forgetful *Real Life* inclusions. A credible

and dignified collection.

On a lower level is Talking Heads' *Once In A Lifetime* which again focuses on a singles/greatest hits angle meaning that the emphasis is in the post-*Remain In Light* phase of the band's career. It starts off with Byrne's legendary twitching 'Psycho Killer', then it's 'Take Me To The River' but by track four we're on album five with 'Burning Down The House', the remaining predictable tracks coming from *Stop Making Sense*, *Little Creatures* and *Naked*. This leaves 'Sax and Violins' from the *Until The End of the World* soundtrack and the catchy unreleased 'Lifetime Piling Up' to drag in Head's fanatics. *Once In A Lifetime* is an unbalanced and superficial survey of a band who helped keep funk and innovation alive in the 80s. They deserve much better.

Staying with funk and with people left-of-centre and we're in the world of the Was Bros who've dished up a selection of what their ads have called "four convicted hits and eight other prime suspects". This isn't a Christmas cash-in but a release that came out in May everywhere else to coincide with their tour with Dire Straits.

Starting with their funk-stein treatment of INXS's 'Listen Like Thieves' they run through their back catalogue using demos and re-mixes. New song 'Shake Your Head' is instantly danceable with sample treatments of Kim Basinger and Ozzy Osbourne's vocals and the dance record of last decade 'Spy In The House of Love' gets a nose job and is still stupendous as is their mammoth signature stomp, 'Walking The Dinosaur'. Freaks and crazies I sure but underneath the humour, 'Somewhere In America' and their cover of 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone' show that there's plenty of perceptions in this madness. Join this club.

Leaving the worst till last leads us to the Hoodoo Gurus double CD — their singles col-

lection *Electric Soup* and a rarities and B-sides compilation *Gorilla Biscuits* which features three covers in 'Who Do You Love', the Flaming Groovies' 'Teenage Head' and Glitter's 'Rock n'Roll Part Two', a mixture of trash and rock n'roll roots, indications as to the source of the Guru's comic strip exuberance.

The band is five albums and nearly 20 singles old and in that body of work they've never hit a seam of consistency. Earlier singles like 'What's My Name', 'Come Anytime' and 'I Want You Back' are irresistible power pop fodder but their later pastiches like 'Miss Freeloze' and 'Castles In The Air' show they haven't sustained their funtime lunacy. Like their albums, this compilation is frustratingly patchy.

**GEORGE KAY**

**TOM WAITS**  
*Bone Machine*  
(Island)  
**NILS LOFGREN**  
*Crooked Line*  
(Rykodisc)

**TIN MACHINE**  
*Live Oy Vey Baby*  
(Victory)  
**THE RAMONES**  
*Mondo Bizarro*  
(Chrysalis)

Four sets of old-timers still clutching at the tinsel. In Tom Waits' case for tinsel substitute crinkled brown bourbon paper bags. A man who peaked with the Beefheartian splendour of *Swordfishtrombones*, Waits is now struggling to shake off his affected, shredded Muddy Waters larynx long enough to evoke anything above his own mutant formula.

On *Bone Machine* he predictably rattles, clanks and rasps his way through a netherworld of blues ('Earth Died Screaming'), gospel ('Jesus Gonna Be Here') and maudlin piano ballads like 'A Little Rain'. But it's only in the frontier ghosts of 'Black Wings' and the collaboration with Keith Richards on 'That Feel' that he shows any hope of breaking out of his self-imposed stylistic straitjacket.

Nils Lofgren, by contrast, is on the rise after last year's stiff



**Nils Lofgren**



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