

OUT FROM THE COLD 1964-72**GET THE PICTURE 1964-72****TOM THUMB****Ludgate Hill/ The Singles (Jayrem/ Legendz)**

'60s NZ rock — there's 50 skiddillion tons of the shit still hanging round somewhere out there, and a heckuva lot of it DOES NOT SUCK. The two compilation volumes here are packed to the nose-cone with stuff ranging from crude garage R&B blast to the decadent hippy-gumbo of '69-72: a period of high adventure, low stoopidity and general anything-goes that NZ musicians pitched into as enthusiastically as anyone anywhere. Nearly half the stuff here slops approximately into the r'n'b/punk bag, a genre which at its best spewed forth some of the greatest rock music ever (for eg., a buncha 16-year-olds calling themselves the Roadrunners, 16 year olds for fucksake and they just toss off the Pretty Things' 'LSD' effortless and natural as flickin' boogers), but more typically consisted of endless endearingly-inept readings of the standard texts — like the Bitter End goofing thru 'Too Much Monkey Business' — ridiculously fast, they don't know the words, what the hex, it still sounds pretty great... Plenty of stuff like this, much of it you're unlikely to've heard before as well as a few actual hits (cos this stuff was actual pop currency back then, o'course) from the likes of Peter Nelson and the Castaways and Bari and the Breakaways... all worth a sniff, and like I said, some of it truly awesome.

Next major category is late-60s (ie experimentally-inclined, psychedelically-informed) pop; you could do a lot of weird things back then and it could still be potential pop music, and so even when this stuff isn't especially great it's still generally of some interest. The real heavies of NZ pop back then were the Fourmyula, represented by the great 'My Mama George' on 'Get The Picture' and just about equally cool is the Simple Image's (of 'Spinning Spinning Spinning' fame) 'The Grooviest Girl In The World' and the Dizzy Limits' 'Alone'.

... which sorta leads into the last semi-definable category cos the Dizzy Limits became Timberjack, represented here by the sitar-propelled spookery of 'Dahli Mohamed' and by then it was the 70s — country-rock, jazz-rock, progressive-rock and what-have-you punted vari-

ously by the likes of Headband, Quincy Conserve and Ticket. Yep, those were the days (as Mary Hopkins said). So OK — two pretty interesting and representative volumes with skeletal but OK liner notes and not too much duplication of stuff off other comps... you could do a bunch worse.

Wellington's Tom Thumb existed in one form or another from 1966 - 1970 and within that time rode the range from basic r'n'b to pop sophistication to proto-heavy, with varying degrees of commercial and aesthetic success. They never got an album out at the time but this CD compiles all their 45s along with five previously unreleased cover versions from their early days. Their first single backed a fairly lame version of 'Respect' with the OK 'Midnight Snack' but the next two were their acknowledged classics — the Small Faces 'What'cha Gonna Do About It' backed with the 13th Floor Elevators' 'You're Gonna Miss Me', and the original 'I Need You' with a rugged approximation of Slim Harpo's 'Got Love If You Want It' on the flip. The first incarnation of the band collapsed soon after that and the new line-up that emerged was quite another kettle of fish, turning up all manner of weird shit, notably the ridiculous 'Witchi Tai To' (a hit! as it deserved to be) and their swansong, the ten minute doom-rock epic 'Ludgate Hill' (which sounds a lot like Gestalt) (or early Deep Purple). The world (and especially Wellington) is unlikely to see their like again, which is too bad.

DUANE ZARAKOV**SUGARCUBES****It's It****Liberation**

Why the dance re-mix album exists in the realms of indie pop is a mystery. The dance version of the rock song always has something sacrilegious about it.

Nevertheless, Iceland's finest brought together a dozen re-mixers to hack away at a selection of their more upbeat numbers. Quite an impressive line up too: 808 State's Graham Massey ('Planet'), house guru Todd Terry ('Gold'), even the Cubes themselves give 'Regina' a seeing to. But unfortunately most of them have gone about smoothing (or cutting totally) the ragged old instrumentation. So you get jigsaw pieces of songs (ie samples of Bjork and Einar) over backbeats and blips — gone is the chaotic attraction, lost are the original sentiments.

A couple of the tracks that were originally weak have improved, the bizarre disco version of 'Leash Called Love' works because it is so divorced from the original. But the classics (yup, they did it to 'Birthday' — twice) sound stripped and desecrated — and seeing as the Sugarcubes have now gone their separate ways *It's It* is a sad way to go out.

JOHN TAITE**GREG JOHNSON SET****Everyday Distortions (Pagan)**

Three years is a long time between debut and follow up albums but the Greg Johnson Set did have commercial success with three singles in the interim. 'Josephine', 'Isabelle' and 'Talk of the Town' have kept the band in public profile not to mention having the band leader as one of the glossy mag "faces" of the early '90s. And it's not that the band have been sitting around waiting for inspiration as Johnson has been paying his dues and bills with jazz band Bluespeak and guitarist Trevor Reekie collects bills as head of Pagan records.

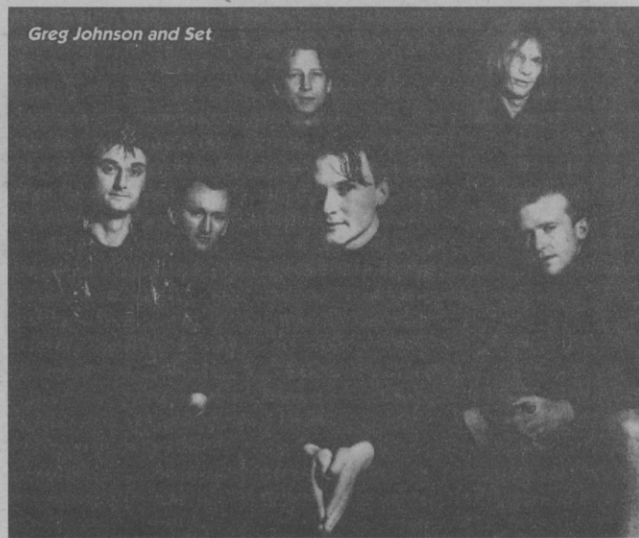
The new album *Everyday Distortions* shows a slight change of direction in the sound as the line-up has mutated and Johnson's style evolved. The sequencers are out, replaced by real keys including some tasty Hammond. Also out unfortunately is much of the trumpet that dominated and made distinctive the style of *The Watertable*. Johnson's lazy jazz tinged vocals are back with more confidence and authority and give a unique flavour to the album separating it from the usual screamers that are "fixed in the mix".

Recorded over a long period of time, this is largely a compilation of sessions with five different producers, five drummers (including the drum programming of Terry Moore on 'The Sleeping Hour') and utilising three studios (Last Laugh, BFM and the Lab). The various time, space and human elements are held and moulded together by Johnson's strong songwriting and his ability to arrange the material within the concept of a band and 'outboard players' as required. A few less 5am sessions may have picked up the tempo on songs but ambient pop is in, or at least coming on strong with this album. The singles proved to be radio friendly and NZ On Air has enabled the group to create a strong visual image via television.

Overall an intelligent album of sophisticated melodic pop with jazz undertones and song hooks that you find yourself singing while waiting for the lights to change.

JOHN PILLEY**JULIANA HATFIELD****Hey Babe****(Festival)**

Yep, the Blake Baby has grown up, or rather is growing. *Hey*

**Greg Johnson and Set****Juliana Hatfield (not Brenda from Beverly Hills...)**

Babe is like that first step out of the protective nest into troubled teenage years. Hatfield's quirky high vocals are eternally adolescent sounding, somewhere between a rock 'n' roll Harriet (Sundays) Wheeler and the sublime harmonies of Aussie pop goddesses like Jodie Phillis or Suzie Higgle.

Evan Dando returns the favour from the Lemonheads album with backing vocals and joining in with Hatfield's jangly yet punchy rock 'n'roll guitars which often sound very similar to the noisy pop/rock of fellow Bostonians Buffalo Tom.

It's somewhat of a wonder her voice survives over the top, but the seeming opposites of childishly pretty vocals and grunty guitars attract like magnets to meld into angsty pop gems like 'Everybody Loves Me But You' and 'Nirvana' — actually a Blakes Babies song if I remember rightly.

Listen to the line "Here comes the song I love it so much — makes me want to go fuck shit up". No one swears as beautifully with such a delicate punch, as Juliana Hatfield.

TONY MILLER**MOTHERLOVEBONE****(Polygram)****BLACK CAT BONE****(Festival)**

For those that came in late, Motherlovebone was formed from the remnants of the seminal northwest USA band Green River, recognised as one of the sparks that ignited the Seattle phenomenon. Supposedly the "next big thing", fame was cut short when lead singer Andrew Wood OD'd two weeks before their debut album *Apple* was

released in 1990. The band recruited Eddie Vedder and reformed as Pearl Jam, the success of which is what, I imagine, inspired this rerelease of all the material they recorded — basically *Apple* and their first EP *Shine*.

Well, 'Thru Fade Away', 'Stardog Champion' and 'Chloe Dancer/Crown of Thorns' (also on the *Singles* soundtrack) are OK but the rest and the bonus CD (with two previously unreleased tracks) are forgettable. It's obvious Pearl Jam's corporate leanings have been in the family tree for quite some time, even more blatant here — it's kind of pseudo glam hard rock. You won't find any of the brilliantly dissonant extremities of Soundgarden or Mudhoney here, but it might appeal if you can stomach the thought of a kind of Pearl Jam, G 'N' R type sound.

Black Cat Bone, who describe themselves as "psycho bleusic rockers" fare somewhat better. Psycho bleusic amounts to sounding like they've been locked in a room with a copy of Led Zep's *Coda* for a long time.

Very authentic, '70s retro riff-laden melodies similar to the Zep/ Cream varieties, and modern day hard rock revivalists like Danzig or the Cult. By no means a fountain of originality but they coax the sort of impressive, snarling solos out of their guitars that Deep Purple would have been proud of. Occasionally it's pompous and overblown, but that's the nature of the genre. Retrogressive as hell, but they're trying to be. BCB achieve what they set out to, with considerable talent. The question is whether it's still rel-

evant in a territory that's been well and truly mapped out before.

TONY MILLER**CONSOLIDATED****Play More Music****(Festival)**

Far from tie-dyed, kaftan-wearing, acoustic guitar protest singers, this American three piece arm themselves with hard-core industrial hip-hop on their quest for social awareness.

Play More Music is a more rounded effort than last year's *Friendly Fascism*. Partly because it's a bloated 27 tracks (half of which are cuts from open forums they hold at their concerts — which has you praising the skip track function after a couple of listens), and partly because guest rappers like Paris and Crack MC offer relief from the constant political correctness.

The (much needed) injection of humour in *Play More Music* has also made Consolidated and its messages more attractive (Q: "Consolidated — don't you think you oversimplify your messages too much?" A: "Yes. Next."). They've still got conspiracy theories that would make Jello Biafra's toes curl, but including tracks like the Yeastie Girls' anthem for equality in bed ('You Suck') confirms their worth outside of the record collections of radicals. Sound politics and great music — who would have guessed it?

JOHN TAITE**TOAD THE WET SPROCKET****Fear****(Columbia)****VEGAS****(RCA)****SONIA DADA****(Festival)**

In the mediocre bag lurk three contenders. Actually, Santa Monica's Toad the Wet Sprocket could almost climb outta there with their west coast REM guitar-chorus competence and overall sensitivity with a song. As proof, 'Stories I Tell' builds quite impressively via a sinewy riff to a pitch of convincing indignation. Elsewhere 'Walk On The Ocean' is forthright and melodic as is their single 'All I Want', examples of anonymously good music wrought by a band who need more public image and pr. One to watch.

Vegas has nothing to do with Las Vegas. This is the peculiar alliance of ex-Specials' vocalist Terry Hall and Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, a collaboration that promises little and delivers even less. Well, that's a bit cruel but this whole album is stuck in a comfortable softly-cushioned reggae groove with Hall's disembodied vocal floating over Stewart's inoffensive tunes like a choirboy in search of a funeral. Too dull to be camp, 'She's Alright', 'Wise Guy' and Aznavour's 'She' are the best things in a record destined for the sale bins before this hits print.

Chicago's Sonia Dada are

SINGLES

The rather lean line-up this month is led by a couple of Australia's finest outsiders — Chris Bailey whose slight reworking of 'Do They Come From You' (White Records) from his addictive *Savage Entertainment* LP has the hairs bristling with its insistent transcendental plea. A 'Wichita Lineman' for the '90s. The rest of the EP is padded out with an acoustic version of 'Fire Would' from *All Fools Day* — very presentable, more than you could say for his lacklustre readings of 'Mystery Train' and 'Bright Lights Big City'.

Second in line is Mr Cave, whose *Henry's Dream* LP is creeping its way to being one of the highlights of the year and from it he lifts 'I Had A Dream, Joe' (Liberation), a boogaloo singalong in customised Cave deadpan reinforced by four live tracks from previous experiences, the picks being a reminder of the splendid obsessive rant of 'The Mercy Seat' and the damn-the-torpedoes Cohenish 'The Ship Song'.

Now it's into what passes for techno, the latest pass-word to dance credibility and critical sympathies. Covering anything from Inner City's soul sheen to Kraftwerk's precise teutonic soundscapes, techno surely has room for Gary Clail's 'Who

Pays The Piper' (RCA) complete with its pulsating Euro-disco machinations and a melodic synthesiser presence of Moroder proportions. A clubland necessity. On the same floor, the Shamen throb and smile with danceable glee knowing that in the irritating 'Ebenezer Goode' (Liberation) they've invented cockney techno-rap and put it in the charts. Cunning chameleons.

The final shock of electronics for this month is Filthy Lucre's multitude of mixes of Hunters and Collectors' 'Talking To A Stranger' (Razor), wherein they retain Seymour's original vocal and bubble like an electric cauldron around it. Kinda cute.

The only thing resembling the British indie scene this month is Sweet Jesus's 'Real Babe' (Rough Trade) whose streamlined, accessible wall-of-sound guitar noise is palatable enough, an adjective that could also be aimed at Annie Lennox's ballad. 'Cold' (RAC) and Australian duo Club Hoy's 'The Other Side of You' (Regular). Like I said, a lean, but not a machine, month.

GEORGE KAY**26 Rip It Up****The late Mother Love Bone****Consolidated**