

Chris Sped ing



Lene Lovich



Mick Farren



Records

Tin Huey Contents Dislodged During Shipment Warner Brothers

Akron, Ohio, is the place name to drop these days. Home of Devo and Rachel Sweet amongst others, it has been the birthplace of a (very) minor resurgence of American rock, Tin Huey included.

Tin Huey, a six piece band of weirdos, come to you by way of Frank Zappa in their smart-ass lyrics and *Hot Rats* in miniature bizarro arrangements. These guys are more than capable and they seem bent on proving it as each song gets the busy treatment with crazy sax riffs, dopey tempo changes and general attempts at eccentricity that fail to make any impression.

One or two saving graces turn up on their re-tread of Robert Wyatt's droll master interpretation of "I'm A Believer", and Harvey Gold must surely be proud of his excellent melody on the intro to "The Revelations of Dr. Modesto". Elsewhere, Tin Huey, seem to be another musical novelty (like Devo) who have very little music of any lasting quality to offer. They appear to regard cleverness and unusual song formats as ends in themselves, and on *Contents Dislodged During Shipment* they fail to capitalise on the few clues that they do possess.

George Kay

Average White Band Feel No Fret RCA

It has been unfortunate for the Average White Band that they peaked so early. Their second album, the white AWB one, is now five years old, but remains a rock classic. One of the best soul records ever made, it has put everything else they have done into shadow.

Feel No Fret should redress the balance. It marks a new creative step forward for AWB.

The band has modified its sound, abandoning the punchy horn riffs and chattering rhythm guitars which were its signature in favour of a cooler, almost wistful sound, based on longer rhythmic lines. Where the fulcrum was once the staccato guitar of Onnie McIntyre, it's now the bass (whether played by Alan Gorrie or Hamish Stuart, both are very fine in their different styles) and an ample helping of percussion (Airtio Moreira guesting).

But as always the heart of AWB is the sublime vocals of Stuart and Gorrie. There should be a law against singers this good. *Feel No Fret* is an album on which it's hard to find highlights (I might opt for the vocal interplay on "Atlantic Avenue") because it's consistently excellent.

Ken Williams

Mick Farren Vampires Stole My Lunch Money Logo

Before the release of this album Mick Farren was best known as a writer with *New Musical Express*. No doubt the easy way out of the review would be to make a few cheap shots to the effect that he should have stuck to writing about rock'n'roll. Not only would that be unfair to someone in love with rock'n'roll for all the right reasons, but the fact is that Mick Farren has come up with a thoroughly likeable album.

Knowing how it should be done may not be quite the same as being able to do it but it certainly means you can give a fair impression, especially when you're helped out by the likes of Wilko Johnson, Larry Wallis and Andy Colquhoun.

When the pace slows the limitations of his rasping delivery become more apparent. If you hear the single "Half Price Drinks" on the radio and aren't too impressed it's only fair to point out that the faster stuff is better. Tracks like "I Don't Want To Go This Way", "People Call You Crazy" and "Fast Eddie" are Farren at his best.

No one would call this album a world beater but there is some good listening to be found among the twelve tracks.

Dominic Free

Cold Chisel Breakfast at Sweethearts Elektra

I wasn't impressed by the TV footage of these guys. They looked and sounded a lot like a second-rate Aussie hard rock outfit, churning out the cliches. *Breakfast At Sweethearts* was

at least a pleasant surprise.

Which is not to say that the cliches are entirely absent. Jimmy Barnes' grating vocals are all too familiar; white boy sings the blues and gets laryngitis. Ian Moss' guitar playing is very competent, but does little more than recycle the standard blues licks, only faster.

What saves their ass is the tunes. There are three or four good ones on the album, all by pianist Don Walker. "Merry Go Round" as a great last line to each verse, "Shippin' Steel" is a successful rock version of the standard trucker's lament, and the title track saves a mediocre pseudo-reggae verse with a melodic chorus. The band rocks hard enough for you not to notice the predictably sexist lyrics if they hadn't printed them for you. If you are going to write songs about the same old situations, then you should at least find a new way of saying it.

This is an album you should play loud at a party, when no one cares about the lyrics anyway. Can't miss. You don't need to be brilliant to be a good rock band, but of course, it wouldn't hurt.

John Malloy

Lene Lovich Stateless Stiff

In showbiz everyone has an image: Ted Nugent eats raw meat and becomes the Wild Man, Rachel Sweet is ripe and pubescent and Lene Lovich is Stiff's mysterious Detroit refugee boasting a cosmopolitan background and (it seems) permanent plaits.

Signed to Stiff last year along with Rachel Sweet and other hopefuls, Lovich exudes the commanding detached sophistication that has reaped rewards/dollars for Patti Smith, but unlike Miss Smith, Lovich is aiming for a less esoteric, mannered effect. *Stateless* is a fine first album proving, quite obviously, the guitarist Les Chappell can write the instant melodic hook (try "Writing On the Wall" and "Too Tender") in suitable collaboration with LL's brand of off-centre lyric. The non-originals, especially Nick Lowe's "Tonight" and the Tommy James' classic "I Think We're Alone Now" are perfectly suited for Lovich's upset-intellectual-in-love-treatment.

With competitors like the theatrically vulnerable Debby Harry on one hand and Patti "Rimbaud" Smith on the other, Lovich has to tread carefully to avoid unfavourable comparisons. *Stateless* proves that she is her own woman, and I hope she stays that way.

George Kay

Chris Spedding Guitar Graffiti RAK

I've always recommended Chris Spedding's records to people should they ever ask. His two solo albums prior to *Guitar Graffiti* are both about fifty percent real good with a couple of stand-out tracks on each — "School Days" and "Silver Bullet" being favourites.

This new one doesn't strike me as being quite so impressive. As always there's a lot of nifty guitar work, straightforward, even classic rock'n'roll arrangements, the occasional naggingly effective hook and a lean, gritty production. This time the production is almost all Spedding's own with only one track by his previous producer Chris Thomas.

What's lacking is good material. Spedding has never been particularly strong on lyrics while still managing to throw off an interesting line here and there, and most of his songs rely on his guitar work for their more arresting and memorable qualities. On this album the songs are thinner than usual and only the lead-off track "Video Life" sticks with me after several playings — and the next best would be "Walking".

Side Two starts off with "Breakout" which is a fair sort of song, most of the rest is a series of strangely on-live sounding live guitar solos divorced from their settings and strung together as "Frontal Lobotomy" and "More Lobotomy". The side closes with a live version of "Breakout".

Maybe Side One will grow on me more. In the meantime I recommend *Guitar Graffiti* only because *Hurt* and *Chris Spedding* are not readily available in these here parts.

Terence Hogan

Matumbi Seven Seals Harvest

Set my people free ... We are heading for destruk-shon ... this is a bad situ-ashon ...

Yes, Jah children, this is another reggae album, which is about all that can be said for it.

Matumbi hail from Battersea in London, and have been performing for about eight years. The name is Nigerian, meaning "Born Again." British reggae is notoriously erratic in quality,

its peak so far being Steel Pulse's sublime *Handsworth Revolution*.

Matumbi, despite capturing numerous awards, seem to stumble over every reggae cliché in the book. Their beat is unvaryingly pedestrian, and the lyrics, as shown earlier, say nothing that hasn't already been thrashed to death.

Glen "Bagga" Fagan, Glaister Venn, Webster Johnson and Dennis "Blackbeard" Bovell harmonise neatly. But it's all precision and no fire. The songs are uniformly dull, the melodies too similar. Only "Empire Road", written for a TV series of the same name, has any spark to it.

Their older material on the Trojan and Safari labels had a raw feel, but commercial success seems to have robbed them of their hunger. When they sing about Soweto, they sound well-fed and complacent.

Maybe they deliver more as a live band. *Seven Seals* just doesn't have the hukas to lift it above the ordinary.

Duncan Campbell

Peter Tosh Equal Rights CBS

CBS have re-released this fine album at a time when Tosh is being seen on the screen courtesy of Mick Mouth and Rolling Stones Records. It's good timing, and the record

deserves it. *Equal Rights* is Tosh's second solo album after leaving the Wailers, and his voice is that of an angry man.

I don't want no peace
I want equal rights
I want justice ...

Every song has a strongly Rastafarian theme, and Tosh as always is committed and intense. The credits read like a who-ranks who Jamaican musicians and includes the ubiquitous Robbie Shakespeare (bass) and Sly Dunbar (drums), the top rhythm section on the island. Carlie Barrett sits in, Al Anderson plays some hot leads, and Bunny Wailer (Bunny Livingstone) adds his backup vocals. Tosh plays his usual choppy rhythm guitar and dabbles in clavinet.

The songs are good. "Equal Rights", "Step-pin' Razor", and "I Am That I Am" are up to his best, and that means excellent. "Get Up Stand Up" is not up to his original version with the Wailers, but then, Marley can't do it so well any more either. "Downpressor Man" is the gospel song "Sinner Man" given a Rasta twist, and showing the biblical roots of the movement.

If you liked the TV clip, check this. Tosh's strong beliefs never once get in the way of making good music. You can dance to it.

I'm like a steppin' razor, don't you
Watch my size
I'm dangerous ...

He means it.
John Malloy

Colin Bayley, Short Story

Tim, Finn, Split Enz

Phil Judd, The Swingers



Live

Split Enz The Swingers Auckland Town Hall

A grand farewell it was indeed, as the Super Six gave it a whirl once more before winging it away again to those hopefully greener pastures overseas.

Before an audience like this, Split Enz could do no wrong. Hard-core fans rushed the stage as soon as their heroes appeared, and it was a long time before they let them go. Even sound problems early in the set were borne with good humour.

The show was a crowd-pleasing balance of old and new. "My Mistake" and "Parrot Fashion Love" drew their customary welcome, and Noel's party piece, as always, brought the house down.

But the new material holds its own admirably. "Give It A Whirl" is already established as a standard, "Betty" is a personal favourite, and "I See Red" brings everybody to their feet to boogie, Enz-style.

Will they make it this time. They certainly deserve to. Bon chance, boys, and don't forget to write.

The Swingers, Phil Judd's new band, aroused considerable interest, taking his reputation into account. Always a quirky performer, his songs in the early days of Split Enz walked the fine edge between genius and insanity.

His vocal style has changed somewhat, now recalling Talking Heads' David Byrne. The new songs are much grittier, with ex-Reps Bones and Buster cranking out a solid driving rhythm to back Judd's very individual guitar style.

The audience was bemused and fascinated all at once, and gave The Swingers a warm reception. A very promising debut, and a welcome return of one of New Zealand's most uncompromising and most distinctive artists.

Duncan Campbell

Short Story Mainstreet, Auckland

The bouncers tried hard not to let me into Mainstreet because I was wearing jeans, which says more about the place than I'm going to.

Kevin Bayley fronts Short Story, and his band shows the same high level of musical ability and professionalism that can be expected of him. Hot dam! they can play. Since his days as guitarist with Rockinghorse, Mr Bayley's singing as got a whole lot better, and he was good then.

His brother Colin (guitar) is an excellent supporting musician, and provided superb vocal harmonies. Steve Garden (drums) and Leon Keil (bass) are as good a rhythm section as any I've seen, so where have they been hiding out? Gary Taylor, a keyboard player beside two solid guitarists, was unfortunately heard only on his synthesizer breaks, which was probably a fault of the house keyboards.

They opened blatantly with their single "Julia", a strong contender for the excellence

in every department award among NZ discs. Their two sets included a few Feat tunes (played with feeling) among a lot of American-influenced rockers. It was good to hear some old wave music of this calibre. Bayley's guitar playing was as outrageously effortless as ever, with his old tendency toward the reckless showing up as a rave or two in the second set.

They're good. When they get a few more original tunes, they're going to be brilliant.

John Malloy

Proud Scum HQ Rock Cafe

Jonathon Jamrag is a star. He fronts the young punk combo Proud Scum. They played to a Thursday night crowd reaching the heady heights of the half hundred at a dis-used milk bar, the Headquarters Rock Cafe. I enjoyed myself.

"Notice the emphasis on original material. Just like Sheerlux" ... sez head Beagle boy Jamrag. A brace of original songs played loud, fast and rough as rabbits, and a couple of covers from the penultimate Brit-punk band, the Troggs. For a young band the level of their songwriting holds great promise for the future.

Proud Scum have enthusiasm, excitement and energy and any other ecstatic cliché starting with E you can think of. Their guiding themes (rabbits and the Beagle Boys) and the presence of Jamrag elevate the band above the ordinary. The guitar and bass rock along on your standard three chord thrash (just like Led Zepp mummy), the drummer is your standard hihat and snare sticksman, but Jamrag jumping around the stage carries the show, fun and surprises galore. They are a welcome change to, too bored to rock'n'roll bands like CB or Sheerlux.

Adam Gifford

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