

RECORDS

Fearless

Talking Heads
Fear of Music
Sire

Talking Heads were part of the New York underground that centred around the Country, Bluegrass and Blues Bar (CBGB's) three years ago or more, and like their contemporaries, Mink de Ville, Ramones and so on, they made it aboveground on their own terms. No compromise. Byrne has emphasised in the past that if he couldn't be successful the way he wanted then he wasn't interested in becoming entangled in the rock'n'roll idiot dance. This single-mindedness coupled with his natural music-as-anguish obliqueness has resulted in three albums thus far, each one unique and each one sharply different from its predecessor but all three unified by Byrne's darting neuroses and nervous angst.

So if you're expecting and/or hoping to find that *Fear of Music* is a duplicate or even an obvious extension of what has gone before then you're mostly out of luck. Let's re-track: 77 was virtually non-produced lean bare-assed songs but was one of the best albums of that very memorable year, and *More Songs* was the band rocking sweetly with Eno having produced a pretty close approximation to their live sound. And now *Fear of Music*: "There's a lot of songs that are really dense sounding on the new record. A lot of them sound pretty psychedelic, not like the Grateful Dead or Jefferson Airplane," but they sound weird with funny sounds and things like that," Byrne said earlier this year.

Actually this description accurately accounts for only part of the diverse musical structure/tone of this excellent album. Perhaps only the more spacious textures of "Mind" and "Paper" on the one hand, and the stomping frustrations of "Animals" and "Cities" on the other, would have been at home on the two previous albums. Elsewhere the band, again under Eno's guidance and contributory "treatments", are trying new arrangements. "Electric Guitar" is a drone-like metaphorical dirge with Tina Weymouth's Eno-treated bass up front, and the knotted disco platforms of "I Zimbra" and "Life During Wartime" are departures from the band's often slight funk of the past. But it's over to "Drugs" and "Memories Can't Wait" to provide the album's most harrowing and overtly phychedelic moments. Using echo and desired sound effects both songs register Byrne's momentary mental aberrations in convincing style. "Drugs" was originally entitled "Electricity" and was recorded last year for inclusion on *More Songs*, but it was rightly considered by the band to be out of step with the mood of that album, so, after a couple of re-workings it saw the light of day on *Fear*.



The song is reminiscent of Pere Ubu, a band Byrne has some time for, in its racked use of space and omission. "Heaven" is worth mentioning if only for its loping Byrd's quality using the same rolling guitar sound Eno produced on Devo's "Gut Feeling", it gets you every time. Talking Heads have also been successful in the single's market, "Love Goes To a Building On Fire" and of course "Take Me To the River" haven't gone unnoticed, and "Air" opening the second side of *Fear* and boasting a sighing girlie back-up vocals, would make an ideal forty-five.

Fear of Music, once dissected, is an even more varied album than the others yet it still has a feel of unity. There are no key, focal tracks, no "Psycho Killers" or "Big Countries" to hang your hat on, instead there's a consistent excellence. It also goes without saying that lyrically Byrne retains his weird perspective of the world, stringing his disconnected thoughts and feelings into eccentric often shouted emotions. And these are emotions you should hasten to examine now.

George Kay



CB's Going Places

Citizen Band
Just Drove Thru Town
CBS

Let's come right out and admit it. Most reviewers are way too kind to Kiwi bands. It's simple — abuse an overseas act and the record company crosses you off their christmas card list. Abuse the local boys and you're liable to be confronted in the pub just when what you needed was a quiet drink and a dose of unwind. This makes a person nervous.

I'm not making excuses. The fact is, Citizen Band deserve to be taken seriously. They are one of the few bands still resident who are performing good original material, doing it well, and making a living. They have made an excellent second album.

CBS obviously takes them seriously. The album is produced (unobtrusively) by Jay Lewis, and packaged bloody well. Its worth checking merely to observe the new standard they have set in covers.

We'll start with side one; five good ones, great to dance to, play it a lot. "No Stereo" is a nifty little number with a new twist on the pub-circuit road fever syndrome.

No stereo
Ever took my place
Someone's Romeo
Smacked me in the face
"We're The Boys" is one of two Mike Chunn songs, and it boasts a snappy chorus that's not quite matched by Mike's vocals on the verses. Brilliant/idiosyncratic as a bass player (and manager), he should maybe leave the vocals to Geoff. But he gets by. His version of Graham Parker's "Protection" is good, but it can't cut it next to the Parker version. Nobody does it better than GP.

One of the gems is "Rust In My Car".
Like rust in my car
You hold the thing together
Both grew up in stormy weather
Geoff Chunn's songwriting has matured with the band, so that songs like this one start out sounding good and then get better with repeated playing. This is talent. "S.O.S." is a slow tune that does the same. I'm not sure whether its the unusual verse structure or the quiet hookline that does it, but it works.

Side Two didn't seem quite as good at first, but it contains several slow fuses that eventually light the spark. "City Slitz" has no problems. The song stretches one of Geoff Chunn's more obscure lyrics across an extended verse (in a bouncy 2/4 time) and then slams you with a classic, singable chorus. I don't understand what it's about, but I like it anyway.

"Another Night, Another River", is a slow fuse, with lyrics that border on the melodramatic. But the good tune and good arrangement, backed up by the most interesting rhythm section in the country, grabs your attention.

Let's get it over with. "A Night At The Brit" is bad news. Regional references are OK, but this

song is rather a hamfisted attempt at catching the NZ flavour. The chorus is duff and Mike Chunn's vocals don't save it. It was well placed on the second side.

They redeem themselves a little with "Acrobats" a second slow one that doesn't quite match up to "S.O.S.". Another one that takes a while to grip is "Snarl", a fairly solid rocker anchored by a fat bass. Once again, Geoff's lyrics border on the obscure but the song is strong. "Just Drove Thru Town" is an instrumental.

CB's strengths lie in their astonishing rhythm section and Geoff Chunn's songs. Their weakness is occasionally in the vocal section, but mostly they compensate very well. They've lost much of the Enz influence detectable on their first album and they play and record like a band with purpose. More than anyone else they sound unmistakably NZ in origin.

All right then. This is a fine second album from about the best Kiwi band currently available. They've got misses for sure, but the hits more than compensate for that. If you haven't checked them live yet, you should have.

You don't need to buy this one for your New Zealand collection. Get it for your playlist. Your friends'll like you more.

John Malloy

Street Rhythm

Crusaders
Street Life
MCA

Crusaders' saxman-bassist Wilton Felder says, "The heartbeat of man is felt in the street." It's a fitting comment on this excellent album. *Street Life* pulses with vitality. It has an implied energy that is absent from so much of the so-called jazz-fusion.

For the first time the Crusaders are working with a vocalist, Randy Crawford, who sings on the 11-minute title track. The groups says they wanted to bring in a vocalist, but someone not too well known. Randy Crawford is perfect. Her voice compliments the Crusaders' instrumental sound wonderfully, and they give her a great street anthem.

The album throbs with the rhythms of tyre rubber and neon lights, fast foods and fast nights, city driving and sidewalk strolling. It's a very impressionistic work, with the tugging rhythms suggesting constantly changing night images. To my mind, *Street Life* is the Crusaders' best work.

The group has reduced to three members, Joe Sample, Wilton Felder and "Stix" Hooper. Numerous "guests" fill out the sound, but there's no loss of identity for the Crusaders.

Street Life topped American jazz charts. Deservedly so. It's one of the most rewarding albums I've heard, more than fulfilling the promise of their previous, excellent *Images*, their first album since the departure of guitarist Larry Carlton.

Ken Williams



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