



Dave Edmunds
Repeat When Necessary
Swan Song

Nick Lowe
Labour of Lust
Radar

Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe are rock brothers of different mothers and it's appropriate to consider them together. Their band, Rockpile, is now billed as "featuring Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe" and, moreover, the same musicians appear on both albums.

Each man has handled production for his own album and it shows the differences in their musical characters. Edmunds' work is perfection itself, running close competition to his landmark album *Get It*. A precise vocalist and guitarist, he has a command of rock forms which enables him to turn unfamiliar songs into instant classics (witness his magnificent reading of Lowe's "I Knew the Bride" on *Get It*). No writer himself, Edmunds has a finely honed facility for finding new or neglected material. *Repeat When Necessary* numbers among its better songs tunes by Elvis Costello ("Girls Talk"), Graham Parker ("Crawling from the Wreckage") and Cliff Richard ("Dynamite").

While Lowe will never have Edmunds' voice or his meticulous approach to his material, Lowe has a goodnatured sloppiness that fits his "have a go" approach to songwriting. Standout tracks on *Labour of Lust* include "Cracking Up", "Big Kick, Plain Scrap" and a truckers' lament, "Endless Grey Ribbon". I find "Cruel to

be Kind", the most catchy song, also the most disposable.

There's enough material between these two blokes for more than one terrific album, but less than two. Who falls short? It probably comes down to a matter of choice — between a polished gem (Edmunds) and a rough diamond (Lowe). Myself, I would opt for Edmunds, whose craftsmanship gives him the edge. Perhaps next time they will consider a *Rockpile* album with the spotlight shared. It could be the answer to the problem of selection when you have to choose between two albums by such complementary geezers.

Ken Williams

B.B. King
Take It Home
MCA

The Blues boy is again teamed with the Crusaders. The album takes a similar route to their previous collaboration, *Midnight Believer*. Perhaps it is a shade too close. There is a nagging feeling of déjà vu throughout. One song is titled "Same Old Story (Same Old Song)" and that about sums it up. What seemed fresh and exploratory on *Midnight Believer* has settled comfortably into a fusion formula.

Not all is lost. He handles an absurd encounter with the Queen of England in "Better Not Look Down" with tongue-in-cheek aplomb and he injects "I've Always Been Lonely" with the depth of feeling that stamps his best material. It's also one of the few occasions when his guitar penetrates the dense arrangements. To relegate Lucille to the background is to misunderstand that the complement of voice and guitar is integral to B.B.

The Sinceros



Nils Lofgren



B.B. King



King's work.

On the superb title track (a reworking of Wilton Felder's "Way Back Home" which I used as a theme on the *Big City Music Blues Show*) Felder takes a singing sax solo which hints at what the album might have been if B.B. had asserted himself more.

Sadly, Felder's fading sax closes the album. This moving fragment serves to underline that too much time has been spent going through the motions.

Ken Williams

The Ramones/Various Artists
Rock'n'roll High School
Sire

This is an oddly mixed bag to be sure. What we have here is the sound track from the movie *Rock'n'roll High school* which features The Ramones. Side one boasts three new Ramones' cuts and a live medley of their past greats. On the flip side is a selection by various artists loosely centre around the theme of youth.

For the Ramones' fan side one is pure joy. The title track is the Beach Boys in overdrive right down to the gorgeous backing vocals. Quite simply it is a latter day classic. Though the other two newies are less rave worthy, they are still good fare.

As for the live medley, "Blitzkrieg Bop", "Teenage Lobotomy", "California Sun", "Pinhead" and "She's The One", that's five songs in ten minutes. The only break comes when Joey delivers one of his two lines in the movie and appropriately he mumbles it. This is the best side of dancing music in a long time.

The rest of the album is certainly pleasant enough. Highlights are offerings by Nick Lowe, Devo, The Hot Rods and Chuck Berry. About Alice Cooper and Brownsville Station you can make up your own mind. By now any Ramones fans are on their way to the record store but for the rest it's not too late to start having fun.

Dominic Free

The Sinceros
The Sound of Sunbathing
Epic

The art of making good summer music seems to have been lost in recent years, and more's the pity.

The last really good summer single was Bob Marley's "Waiting In Vain", and that was nearly three years ago.

So what is the summer sound? It's that sparkling clean feeling, like emerging from the surf after the first dip of the season. It sounds magical blaring from a thousand trannies on Piha Beach. It should be as sweet as a cold ale when the temperature hits the 30's, and as memorable as a roll in the sandhills.

Maybe the Sinceros have rediscovered the art. Their previous claim to fame is helping out on Lene Lovich's album. Now, on their own, this nifty little four-piece has enlisted the help of Boz Scaggs' producer Joe Wissert, and made a platter that deserves thrashing to death in the coming months.

They have high, clear voices, harmonise beautifully, and write concise, catchy pop tunes that are not too heavy, not too light, and are just made for the radio. The title says it all. Londoners they may be, but the Sinceros have sand between their toes.

Buy this record, petition your station to play it, and pray for a long, hot summer.

Duncan Campbell

Nils Lofgren
Nils
A & M

Nils is Nils Lofgren's first studio album in over two years and happily, marks a return to form after the serious tapering off in quality evident on his last three albums. Lofgren emerged from his several year's stint with Grin and his work as guitarist and piano player with Neil Young with a larger reputation than audience. As a result his first solo album, *Nils Lofgren*, was an unjustly overlooked work. He allied his ability to write nifty pop songs with hard-hitting power chords and turned out several minor masterpieces — "Back It Up", "I Don't Want to Know", "Keith Don't Go" and "The Sun Hasn't Set On This Boy Yet". It was a style that was only to become fashionable in the hands of

new wave brigade a couple of years later.

Lofgren's albums after this first displayed a sorry lack of awareness of his strengths — as the guitar work became more dominant, the songs became less interesting — a process which reached its nadir in his last release, the live album *Night After Night*, where many of the songs were undermined by the overemphasis on solos and a curiously lifeless attack.

The new album marks a change in several respects. For the first time Lofgren works with producer Bob Ezrin — whose earlier work includes Peter Gabriel's first album, Lou Reed's *Berlin* and several Alice Cooper albums. Here, Ezrin's everything-and-the-tubular-bells approach is often at odds with Lofgren's modest songs. His use of ring-side sound effects on "No Mercy", a song about the rookie taking on the champ, succeeds only as parody. But Ezrin's method has its successes here too: on the beautiful "Shine On Silently" he provides a brilliant gloss that enhances the translucent melody.

But for all the unevenness of the remainder of the album, it's heartening to see Lofgren back on course doing what he does best — making quality pop music. Welcome back.

Alastair Dougal

Ted Nugent and Band



Earthquake
Levelled
Beserkley

Ted Nugent
State of Shock
Epic

Two faces of heavy metal.

Over the years Ted Nugent has carefully nurtured a wild man persona, a tough guy who eats raw meat and strangles buffalo with his bare hands just to keep in shape for his women. The ultimate chauvinist, but he sells records. Initially, Nugent's play-acting was great fun but his luntheaded stance has stifled and ran rough-shod over his music for too long. Okay he's a good guitarist, flashy, and that's what heavy metal's all about but I'm tired of his albums being all the same and all designed to advance the folklore of Ted Nugent.

If you're a fan then Nugent will never disappoint, but if you're looking for something new from this man then forget it. Try Earthquake instead ...

When Matthew Kaufman launched the first big little label, Beserkley, in 1975, he pursued a policy of variety-is-the-spice-of-a-successful-record company when he signed up his super-heroes. So he grabbed hold of the Milky Bar Kid (Jonathan Richman of course), all-rounder, Greg Kihn, Raspberry-ites the Rubinoos and, to add good rock'n'roll muscle, he signed Bay Area's Earthquake.

A five piece, Earthquake, by their very name, the title of the album, *Levelled* and the send-up photo of the band on the sleeve, make it plain that their aim is fun, not the heavy metal credibility martyrdom that Nugent has adopted. Playing just as a good mainstream rock band they zip through worthwhile covers of "Kicks" and "Emma" and they play popular HM with the same sense of good-naturedness that has made Handsome Dick Manitoba and the Dictators household names.

Yup, Nugent sure could learn from these youngsters, if it's not too late.

George Kay

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