



Alive & Kicking

RECORDS

Jo Jo Zep

It's A Steal

Various Artists
Virginity
Virgin

There's nothing new about the concept of a sampler album as most record companies in the past have released compilations usually aiming to draw public attention to a new group of unknown talents. Years ago Vertigo, then a new label, released a double album hotchpotch to parade their new progressive hopefuls. Phillips let the world in on their *Revolutionary Sampler* for a dollar and CBS assembled *Fill Your Head With Rock*. To name but three, and now *Virginity*.

It is a carefully conceived (sorry) double album devoted to artists, as the title pun implies, on the Virgin label and it's available only in this country. It's designed not only as an advert for the represented acts but as an album in its own right with each side containing compatible music.

Side One is not only the first but the best; seven tracks seven bullseyes — XTC's "Are You Receiving Me?", Magazine's "Shot By Both Sides" (album version unfortunately) and Penetration's "Life's A Gamble" amongst them. Side Two focuses on disco after the Records' opening shot "Girls That Don't Exist", and Sparks meander through "La Dolce Vita" before Supercharge ("I Can See Right Thru You") and Noel ("I Want A Man") put matters right.

Record Two, Side One with tracks by Mike Oldfield, Tangerine Dream and ending on the Sex Pistols' "The Complex World of John Rot-

Magazine



ten" is disappointing and perhaps only Kevin Coyne's "I'll Go Too" is worth your time. Side Four, though, is a telling marriage of punk and reggae, two forms of music not a million miles apart, with contributions by the Members, Skids, the Ruts and Culture, to name a few.

Virginity is available through normal retail outlets and if you're lucky you'll pick one up. Otherwise post five bucks to RTC, PO Box 3825, Auckland, and quick. Either way it's a steal.

George Kay



never did. I believe him. It's tough, exciting soul music played with the Cropper/Dunn feel you can hear on Otis Redding or Sam & Dave albums.

It may be that the production has finally done the trick for this band. There's not a note out of place here, the mix is faultless, and the effects, such as didgereedoo and female backup singers, never intrude. Pete Solley makes the band sound good without stamping his own mark all over the music.

If any criticism can be levelled, it is that their influences (Southside Johnny, Parker, Jagger, and maybe Tosh) are fairly obvious. But the fact that they can sound this good puts them out of the class of mere imitators.

Don't miss it.

John Malloy

The Ruts



Falcons Fly

Jo Jo Zep & the Falcons
Screaming Targets
Mushroom

Generally the Aussies produce very competent but uninspired rock'n'roll. Bands like Cold Chisel, Midnight Oil, and Little River Band typify this. *Screaming Targets* is Jo Jo Zep's third album, and it verges on the inspired.

Jo Jo is a bloke called Joe Camilleri, who sings and plays sax. The rhythm section came from Daddy Cool, and it was Daddy Cool's Ross Wilson who produced the band's first two albums. The guitarists are Jeff Burstin and Tony Faehse, both of whom co-write with Camilleri, and Wilbur Wilde adds the other sax. Together they sound a lot like the Asbury Jukes, a resemblance that carries through to Camilleri's vocals. They play R&B with a class that transcends their influences.

On this album, the band uses a reggae feel on three or four numbers, especially the superb "Hit and Run". It's hard to pin down why the song is good, but it's easily the closest I've heard a white singer come to capturing the Toots feel.

Other reggae songs such as "Katschra", or the brilliant "Open Hearted", reflect both the JA influence and the New Orleans style that originally influenced the Jamaican musicians. The Falcons use the reggae feel in a rock setting without sounding derivative.

In the same way, the R&B that has been their forte up till now comes out of the grooves sounding more natural than ever. "Only the Lonely Hearted" and "Don't Wanna Come Down" sound like the Falcons, tough but sentimental, arranged but jumping. The one slow tune on the record, "Close to the Bone", is carried like it was the Stax house band at the wheel. They more than do justice to Mickey Jupp's "You Made a Fool Out of Me".

The package comes with a free live album that makes it a bloody good deal. Our own Alastair Dougal has seen them live, and he assures me that these cuts capture the band's abilities in a way that their first two albums

It's Alive
Ramones
Sire

Why hadn't it been discovered before 1976? Why hadn't some heads down bat-outta-hell pack of mothers discovered that you could mix pop teenage angst with slamming superfast power chords in a two to three minute time limit? Why did we have to wait until the Ramones? Who knows?

Whatever, when New York's finest hung that first blitzkrieg pogo album on a dazed complacent public there were few survivors after the first side assault, no one could muster the required nerve to take a second wave. The Ramones came on like the Fastest Heavy Metal Band in Town and they never let up — second song same as the first, third song same as the second — it was like a rock'n'roll dream, pure unrelenting energy. Here were guys willing to rock in the all-out meaning of that beautiful word without letting godawful ballads and slow songs destroy their high octane propulsion.

Yet there was a helluva lot more to them than just amped-up energy. Their songs were stripped down pop anthems of teen frustration that shrewdly communicated with any kid even half interested in rock'n'roll and "Gimme Gimme Gimme" became the focal warcry of the late seventies just as "Awopbopaloobop" summed up the essence of the fifties.

It's Alive, taken from their first three albums and recorded at their New Year's Eve concert in the Rainbow, is everything you'd expect from a Ramones shindig, it's the next best thing to being there and the ultimate dance album. The songs are all slightly faster but otherwise basically unaltered and there's pauses between each song just long enough for the "wun chew free fore" intro.

Undertones aside, no one has ever come close to capturing the rapid blows of the Ramones' naive energy in full flight. The only true power pop, accept no substitute.

George Kay

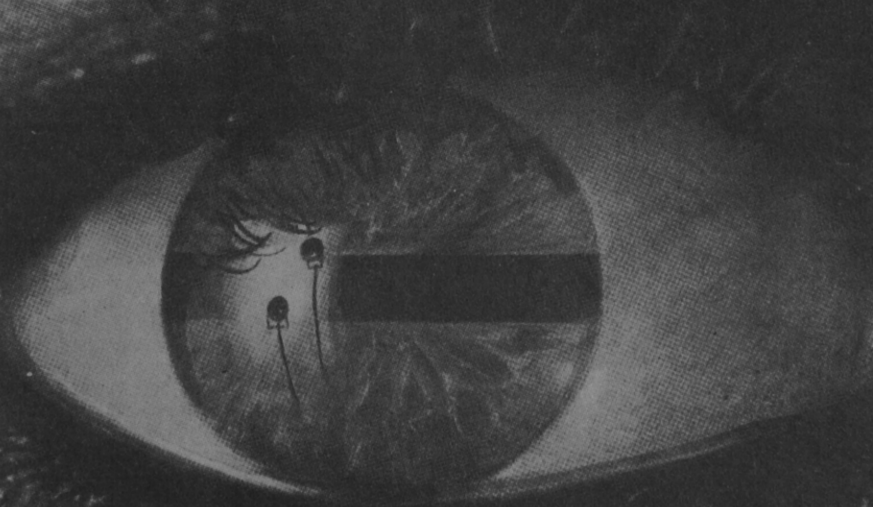
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