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Cowboys Ruts etc



Cowboys International
The Original Sin
Virgin

The Ruts
The Crack
Virgin

Fingerprintz
The Very Dab
Virgin

The adventurous Virgin policy of snapping up new comers has earned the label a rosy reputation. The three new signings under scrutiny represent a healthy cross-section of what is currently going down.

Fingerprintz are a tough little pop unit from South London relying on the flexible songwriting skills of Jimmie O'Neill and the chunky guitar leads of Cha Burnz. The band are at their best when O'Neill's songs are terse and lean, ("Tempermental" and "Close Circuit Connection") but they tend to over-reach when they tackle more obtuse songs like "Beam Me Up Scotty" and "Invisible Seams". Still, the ideas are there.

Virginity gave us a representative foretaste of the Ruts on "Babylon's Burning" and from that I sized them up as a poor man's Clash, which is just about right. With their vague reggae affiliations it would have been reasonable to hope that they might have developed on the Clash's "Police and Thieves" cover, but *the Crack*, other than on "Jah War", plays it safe but certainly sound in a revival of the punk spirit. If you like nostalgia try "Human Punk".

Of the three albums, Cowboys International's is by far the best. What the other two merely hint at, Bowie incarnate Ken Lockie delivers in full with cocksure ease. Fingerprintz and the Ruts represent the hard-case eight-days-a-weekers of rock'n'roll who might make a few ripples before they submerge but Lockie and his CI are making waves now.

From Newcastle, he formed the band however in London with ex-Clash Terry Chimes (Tory Crimes) on drums amongst others. *The Original Sin* is as mature as debuts can be and there are at least four songs in attendance that Bowie would/should give his eye-teeth for, "Thrash", "Here Comes A Saturday", "Aftermath" and "Lonely Boy", all exuding Thin White Duke vocal twang and phrasing circa *Space Oddity*. Lockie, of course, adds his own unique brand of suss, but all in all the album is a lesson in how to be derivative without being fatuous or superfluous. Gary Numan could learn something.

Times are good when debuts like *The Original Sin* are around.

George Kay

Penetration
Coming Up For Air
Virgin

Sad but true, fully three quarters of the new hopes who appeared in the British new wave boom have now returned to obscurity. Penetration are one of the bands who have survived. For better or for worse they have done so by ditching their adherence to punk musical tenets like speed and simplicity.

On their debut album of 1978 the band showcased their jagged song structures, sparse arrangements and almost uncomfortably hard metallic sound to critical and popular approval. Now the pace and obvious energy have gone though there is still tension and a hard edge to the material.

Nevertheless this is if anything a superior album. Overall the band demonstrates an increased capability and lead guitarist Fred Purser has lost none of his melodic dash. Now they also turn the studio facilities to their advantage with some interesting experiments in the mixing. Vocalist Pauline Murray is in her best chilly toned form.

My own enthusiasm for the band has waned but I would still recommend a listen to this for anyone who liked the first album. File this one under uneasy listening.

Dominic Free

Skids
Days In Europa
Virgin

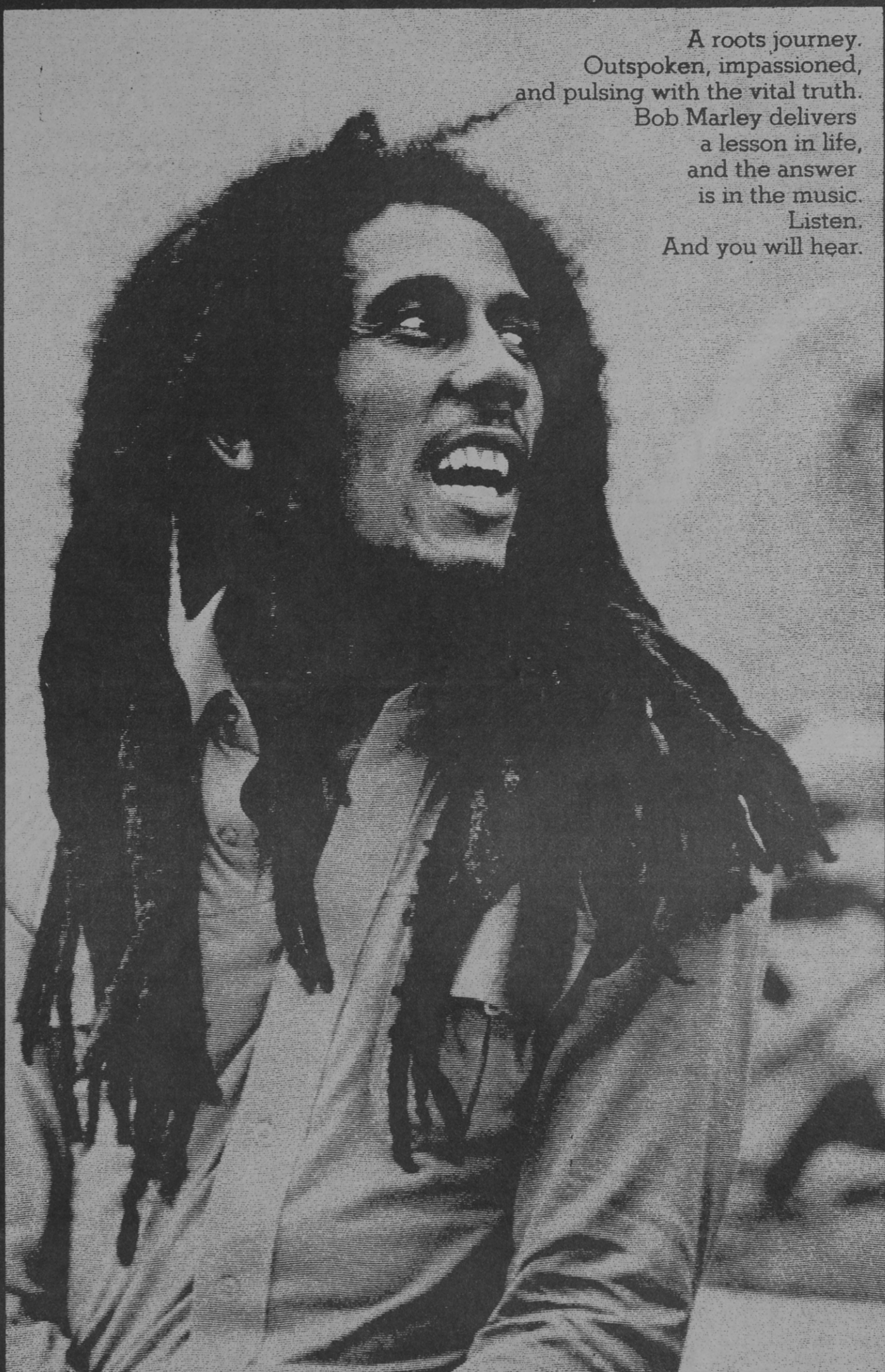
My vote for best 1979 album is split between the Members' *Chelsea Nightclub* and Skids' *Scared to Dance*.

There lies a good example of directions the latest products of new wave are taking. The Members appear to be content to joke and jibe, Skids, though, are after bigger fish. Richard Jobson's lyrics abound with fanciful phrases, ethereal imagery and existential themes. The pity is that by setting their sights so high, they're maybe aiming a little too high for their potential audience.

A new drummer and producer hasn't made a great deal of difference to the overall sound. Stuart Adamson's well-oiled rotoring guitar still

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