

Briefs

Nina Hagen, Fearless (CBS)

Ms Hagen's newie has nothing new or exciting to offer. In fact, it's hard to imagine that the same "wunderkind" who brought us such classics as 'Auf rummel' and 'Smack Jack' could produce something as uninspired and trivial as this. Quirky rhythms and synthesised vocals abound, but they provide only thin cover for a lack of real substance. What is missing is Nina's old personality and presence which, sadly, she seems to have abandoned in favour of a technically excellent but very bland sound. One or two good tracks excepted, *Fearless* is a non-event. RR

The Neighbours Vocal At The Local (Jayrem)

A disappointment. Recorded from the mixer last August at the Ponsonby Hotel by Doug Rogers and repeatedly remixed by Lee Connelly and Paul Streekstra, the emphasis is on clarity rather than energy. 'Seen It Coming' and 'Down, Down, Down' make the grade but only because pace carries them through. Meanwhile, 'Funky Kingston' is stiff, jaded and boring and 'Love Is Never Cruel' limps under some flat honking. The album lacks virtually everything a good live album needs and so certainly fails to do justice to the typical Neighbours' gig. Not the way to bow out. GK

Alberta Hunter

Look For The Silver Lining (CBS)

Veteran producer John Hammond continues his sympathetic and tasteful collaboration with octogenarian marvel Alberta

Hunter. Pianist Gerald Cook again directs the small-combo settings for Alberta's freely swinging vocals. Songs include gospel, ballads, blues, standards and originals, even a French love song. Alberta Hunter is a treasure. KW

Blue Oyster Cult Revolution By Night (CBS)

A from more consistent album than their last studio outing *Fire of Unknown Origin*. 'Shooting Shark' and 'Light Years of Love' are the standouts and 'Feel the Thunder' is appropriately titled, sending your speakers into reverb plus. There is no filler on this driving, no-nonsense album but I wonder if the band has any audience in Godzone in 1984. DP

Renée Geyer, Favës (Mushroom)

The best soul vocalist in Australasia (and many would extend that accolade further afield) presents a retrospective drawn from a decade's albums and singles. And although it's divided into sides for 'Dance' and 'Romance', Geyer's wide range of recording styles makes the collection a little lumpy. The latter grouping works well enough, partially because the majority of tracks are drawn from 1974's *Ready To Deal*. The dance side, however, veers from 'Say I Love You' to steamy funk to an unfortunate exercise in semi-metal. Nonetheless, individually, the vast majority of these cuts present impeccable evidence of Geyer's marvellous talent. Furthermore we get seven tracks a side, including a fine recent single that never got released in NZ. PT

Willie Nelson, Without A Song (CBS)

Is it five years since *Stardust* put Willie Nelson centre stage? Nelson, who is putting out more albums than seems sensible, is here reunited with producer-arranger

Booker T. Jones for another series of immaculately crafted ballads. As with *Stardust*, Willie shows his extraordinary ability to recast a (too familiar?) song as his own. The feeling is languid, the music delicately textural. Charming, although some will find it sluggish. Clarence Clemons KW

and The Red Bank Rockers Rescue (CBS)

Springsteen's sidekick steps out. (Well one really can't blame him, seeing that Bruce has spent about 18 months mixing his current album.) Yet Clemons is loathe to stray from the format he knows and so what we get is a sub-E Street Band with a second-hand Gary Bonds soundalike on vocals. Clarence, y'see, just blows the solos and does some co-writing. Not surprisingly the best number is the one that Bruce donated. Worst is probably the bashing handed out to 'Resurrection Shuffle'. OK Clarence, back in behind the Boss now. PT

Cocteau Twins Head Over Heels (4AD)

I've always been wary of 4AD bands. It happened a while back with the purchase of a certain horrendous Mass album and from such an unsettling beginning my phobia has increased.

The Cocteau Twins' *Head Over Heels* does little to dispel the unease. For the life of me I know not who the Cocteau Twins are but the female sings in a small, high-backed wailing voice — a twee Siouxsie without the barbs. Around her chime soothing guitars, commencing a lament that attempts to build up some form of atmospheric tumult.

All sounds a bit too much? Well, it is fine in small doses, especially 'Sugar Hiccup' and the more meaty 'In the Gold Dust Rush' but all too soon suffocates

in lachrymose sentiment. The real shame is that the Cocteau Twins envince no real pang, they lack the truthful recollection redolent of, say, the Go-Betweens. In this respect, *Head Over Heels* is just plain drippy. A great flaccid stinker me thinks. SJT

Christine McVie (Warner Bros)

It's easy to dump on this stuff, too easy. After all it's not so long ago that McVie was responsible for many of those *Rumours* running rife around the planet. Here, separated from the corporate personality that encompassed Nicks' feather-brained fantasies and Buckingham's quirky talent, Ms McVie's silken voice and manicured music appear pure poolside L.A. But even with that normally languid approach her talent still glistens. It's a fine line between the coolly relaxed and the simply lazy and Christine McVie is careful not to cross it. This album marks the fifth and final soloist to step out from under the big Mac. It also marks the most consistently successful. PT



Prince Charles

great imitation Mayfield vocals. The closing track, 'Rough', is a neat mixture of scratch and mix with Dunbar laying down nice sparse rhythms — anything but soulless. This is Herbie's most satisfying work to date, with none of that 'I can get down as well as you can' attitude that spoils his earlier work. It also contains that monster 'Rockit', the 'Wipeout' of the techno age. Have some fun with Herbie. KB

Prince Charles & City Beat Band Gang War (Virgin)

This is Prince Charles' first album, but the second to be released here. It's a fusion of Bootsy Collins and George Clinton's P-Funk and the hard street funk of the Ohio Players and early Kool and the Gang. It's

almost a history lesson in 70s funk — he even attempts a Barry White/Isaac Hayes pastiche in the insipid 'Passion', the only real dud on the album. The rest of the tracks are interesting exercises in hard funk. The only other thing I don't like is his use of imagery (sex, cash, streetlife) — when compared to Rick James or that other Prince's 'Lady Cab Driver' it becomes cartoonish. Prince Charles appears to be the Mr T of funk. KB

Natalie Cole, I'm Ready (Epic)

The question is, ready for what? I can understand albums like this, they present a large existential void. There's just nothing there. Ms Cole, with one hit and several lacklustre albums, just can't hit the big time. This record has the required number of uptempo and ballad tracks, each with the prerequisite clichés — patterned Stanley Clarke "funk" bass, "soul" vocal and clever string and horn arrangements. But there's no meaning in the design. For real soul architecture listen to Luther Vandross and Aretha Franklin. KB

Earth, Wind and Fire Magnetic (CBS)

I must admit that I find Maurice White's vision of the universe rather hard to take. But I've always loved the beauty of the music — tracks like 'Boogie Wonderland', 'September' and 'Shining Star' are still great listening. The problem with this album is that there's more Maurice White sermonising than there is good groove music. It lacks that hard cutting edge and due to the predominance of synthetic programming the famous EWF horns have to take a back seat. It's not a great EWF album but it's better than most current releases. Hot cuts are 'Magnetic', 'Moonwalk' and the mid-tempo 'Touch'. KB

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