

# Records

**Cold Chisel**  
**Twentieth Century**  
**WEA**

For the considerable number of Cold Chisel fans, their last album, *Circus Animals*, was a disappointment, largely because the band sought to gain mass market acceptance and, at the same time, appease the loyal by throwing them a few crumbs. The result was an awkward posture in no man's land.

*Twentieth Century* attempts no such compromise and in the context of the band's demise as a live entity is a surprisingly satisfying album. The big plus is that Don Walker, Chisel's best songwriter, contributes most of the songs — 'Hold Me Tight' and 'Build This Love' are vintage Chisel. In addition to fine contributions on guitar Ian Moss gives creditable vocal performances on Walker's jazz-based 'Saturday Night' and the ponderous blues item 'Janelle'.

Jim Barnes contributes three songs but all are ho-hum rockers. What *Twentieth Century* indicates is that Walker's incisive musical arrangements coupled with his looking-glass lyrics give Barnes the scope to exercise his awesome set of tonsils in a constructive way. Barnes' own compositions tend to reduce him to a shouter and he is far more than that. Interestingly, Steve Prestwich, writer of the

ballad hits on *Circus Animals*, plays on only three tracks and to all intents and purposes is no longer part of the band.

*Twentieth Century* is more than just a leftover artefact of one of Australia's greatest bands. Like the earlier albums (*East* excluded) it is marred by filler but as a curtain call it is far more satisfying than *Circus* — almost a case of putting the record straight.

**Dave Perkins**  
**Thomas Dolby**  
**The Flat Earth**  
**EMI**

This is the album that saves Dolby from synth-pop and (early) sterility. Better yet, *Wireless*' wide-screen production has here been reduced to more modest features; fleshed out with more ideas per groove than lesser mortals have in whole albums.

'Screen Kiss' and the title track are lush tapestries of sound that float and chatter over sparse rhythms and fretless bass — positively organic. 'White City' is straighter, more typical Dolby — like OMD playing the theme from Thunderbirds. Only 'Mulu of the Rainforest' fails, sinking in over-production and tedium.

Things brighten though with a wry and subtly bizarre cover of Dan Hicks' Texican swing-thang 'I Scare Myself'. This music oozes — then(!) 'Hyperactive!' crunches(!) through your eardrums. Trombones, thundersheets and concussion slapped into a furious dance groove. It is, also, a slyer, funnier send up of Michael Jackson than the terminally silly 'Eat It'.

Sweat, style, and art for art's sake. And all this from the man whose last video made Magnus Pyke the hippest thing since Whodini had crap-attacks.

Pretension with a smile.  
**Andrew Rockell**

**Joe Ely**  
**High-Res**  
**MCA**

From the State that gave you ZZ Top and Dallas, yeah, that's Texas to you boy, Joe Ely emerged in the late 70s. Four studio albums, a couple of live albums and a pile of praise later and he's still no household name.

Ely is no redneck but that doesn't mean to say he votes Mondale. His songs, mainly, are touchstones for the USA folklore of hard sex ('Lipstick in the Night' and 'She Gotta the Gettin''), good lovin' ('What's Shakin' Tonight' and 'Dame Tu Mano') and outlaw blues ('Letter to Laredo'). But beyond the stereotype Ely shows some worldly sympathy in 'Madam Wo' and some perception in 'Dream Camera'. And his delivery ain't the clichéd good rockin' tonight or the slap 'em down boogie of ZZ Top. He works a neat little pathos on 'Letter to Laredo', a real scenario on 'Dame Tu Mano' and a Springsteenish drama on 'Dream Camera'.

All this means Ely is no dumb rhinestone cowboy and you could do worse than check out *Hi-Res*.  
**George Kay**

**Luther Vandross**  
**Busy Body**  
**Epic**

In the 70s the regeneration of the traditional soul idiom came with Al Green, a Georgia country boy. In the 80s Luther Vandross, an urban middle class New York resident, is writing new life into the old soul style. Like Green, he has a distinctive sound and is similarly good-humoured, eccentric and innovative.

Vandross mixes modern funk (his bassist/co-writer is Miles Davis sideman Marcus Miller) and a delightfully trivial modern vision with old soul themes.

*I'll go 10 rounds with Sugar Ray*  
*I'll eat my Weeties every day*  
*For the sweetness of your love*  
On *Busy Body*, his third excellent album (both previous albums are available in this country), he uses synth bass with excellent results on 'I'll Let You Slide' and 'Sweetness of Your Love'.

As the greats of soul are never confined to a narrow groove, *Busy Body* varies from fast dance pace to slow ballads (rarely my cup of tea), yet all are clearly in his own unique manner. A remarkable achievement in these modern times.

**Murray Cammick**

**Hyphen-Smythe**  
**Bad Ass**  
**TV Eye**

Let me explain. Hyphen-Smythe has sung and played guitar for the Picnic Boys and Say Yes To Apes, those very ova of TV Eye Records. Hyphen-Smythe is not his real name.

This isn't really like you've heard him before. Most of the guitar is acoustic and friends play flute and saxophone. 'Green' and 'Freaks' have a pastoral, almost classical, air and 'Theme From Badass' is sort of cocktailish. Metallic guitar drive surfaces only on the dark 'Running Table', and then only quietly. I'll end the descriptions here because there's too much to describe. Suffice to say my favourite tracks are 'Freaks', 'Toddler Gets Caught in the Rain' and the dreamy 'The Moon Sleeps', which doesn't mean to say I necessarily understand what they're about.

If you want reference points,

say Syd Barrett — but only in that there's the same sense of *where did these ideas come from?* Hmm...

HS has, of course, flaws. But it's his technique that's flawed, not his imagination. I think he and the other Teev mutations will eventually make better records than this but for now this is just fine. And that's *Bard Arse*.  
**Russell Brown**

**Whitesnake**  
**Come An' Get It (Liberty)**  
**Slide It In (Liberty)**

*Come An' Get It* is Whitesnake's classic 1981 release reissued and if you missed it the first time around you have been given a second chance. Probably their most consistent album, it contains songs like 'Hot Stuff' and 'Till the Day I Die', which showcase the band at their raunchy best.

Their new album *Slide It In* introduces a new rhythm section and guitarist — Cozy Powell for Ian Paice on drums, Colin Hodgkinson for Neil Murray on bass and Mel Galley for Bernie Marsden on guitar. The band losses little from the change in personnel but the material they are working with is wearing a little thin. There are more notable exceptions — 'Slow An' Easy' has Moody playing exquisite slide guitar and 'Gambler' and 'Standing in the The Sound'.

The Sound have been criticised for playing the role of imitators rather than innovators — their newest effort does little to restore faith. U2 and Bunnymen influences seem rife — I'll leave you to figure out the similarities between 'Winter' and U2's 'October'. If the imitations were well done they might even be acceptable but for the most part the material here sounds rather stale and dreary. To

be sure, the fast and alluring opening track, 'Golden Soldier', is a stunner, but the rest of the album can only limp along in half-hearted pursuit. A fresher and more original approach is sorely needed.  
**RR**

**Marillion**, *Fugazi* (EMI)  
Apparently me and only about 800 other people enjoyed Marillion's first album *Script For a Jester's Tear*. Roughly the same number are going to invest in this one, I'd say. Continuing very squarely in its predecessor's footsteps (English art-rock of a very old fashioned ilk), the cover, production and playing are great and most tracks are right up to scratch. But there is filler here that suggests a major injection of new ideas will be recruited to sustain this band to a worthwhile third album.  
**CC**

**Triumph**, *Never Surrender* (Attic)  
Modelled squarely on compatriot trio Rush, Triumph score with a higher quota of rock 'n' roll. This latest high-tech hard rock bombast continues with their favourite themes of the individual versus the state and rock 'n' roll salvation. Rubbing shoulders with the cream of the metal pack and particularly good for giving your stereo a strenuous workout. (If you dig this one, check out their meisterwork, *Allied Forces* — stadium rock with balls.)  
**CC**

**Strange Tenants**  
*Take One Step* (EMI)  
Strange Tenants are a seven-piece Melbourne band who should be touring here later in the year. Their one claim to fame so far is support on a UB40 tour and they've certainly picked up influences from that direction. The vocals and horns are pure copy-book stuff, however, the jaunty title track here could well be a radio hit.  
**ME**



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