

# Records

## Cabaret Voltaire Micro-phonies Virgin

Rock's radics Cabaret Voltaire can't be second guessed. Each of their 11 albums — cacophonous symphonies — challenge with their approach and fascinate with contorted, threatening sound. This is the cutting edge of popular music, the benchmark by which pretenders are judged.

*Micro-phonies* finds the Cabs making use of state-of-the-art electronics in tandem with more traditional tools. Sound fragments are meshed together with pulsing drum programmes. But here there's no rule book; elements flow in, are strictly altered, then dispersed.

These nine tracks are denser and more menacing than those on 1983's *Crackdown*. The white noise typical of CV's earlier work, absent from that album, has been replaced with additional tapes and electronic scratchings. 'Do Right' features theme reconstruction around stuttering vocals. 'Theme From Earthshaker' (a forthcoming film scored by the dynamic duo) is grandiose and powerful. 'James Brown' strips elements from the Godfather of Soul's work and redefines hard funk.

*Microphonies* is uncompromising, cold and devastatingly clear. Cabaret Voltaire remain masters of their craft.

David Taylor

## Fall Perverted By Language CBS

In which the most English band since the Kinks enlist the aid of an *Americanto* to fill the gap left by the disappearance of all-round neat person Marc Riley and good Northern patriarch E. Smith takes a woman to wife. But good Christ above! The little woman is the American!

CBS have taken a year to



The Cabs: Richard Kirk (left) and Stephen Mallinder.

release this album and *R/U* haven't been given a review copy yet so I'm playing my old import copy so I don't know if the NZ version includes the inner sleeve or if it's a good cut and pressing.

Side Two is the Fall pretty much as we expect 'em with the centrepiece being 'Tempo House', live in Manchester, which is almost guitarless and features Craig Scanlon on idiosyncratic backing vocals.

Brixie Smith plays guitar and is the proud possessor of a lead vocal and a composing credit! Question: is Mark of the North going soft? Let's hope so if it means more Brixie. (See 'Oh! Brother' 45.)

Side One is a different kind of Fall, starring Karl Burns 'Boris the Spider', backing vocals on 'Eat Y'self Fitter' (a funny song) and the twin tribute to the Velvets of 'Garden' and 'Hotel Bloedel'.

'Garden' is re-invention of the Christ-myth, part slag-off of Smith's own writing and could there be references to good ol' NZ in there? ("Godzone, Godzone:" and "Five years back at least he's the 'young generation' tryna perform country and western.") I doubt it, but it gives me the chance to display my grasp of Fallyrics and it's the only song with words enclosed so I cheated anyway...

'Hotel Bloedel' is pure Velvet Underground. Brixie sings it like Mo Tucker (whose presence is there on drums too) and her hubby supplies swipes of violin that work to a 'T'.

What a good album.

There's a video of similar name which includes three or four of the songs here plus some other stuff,

that is really worth trying to get, if only to laugh at the Fall taking the piss out of themselves in an extremely classy fashion. (Sounds Unltd, Queen St have a hire copy otherwise write to Ikon FCL, 86 Palatine Rd, West Didsbury Manchester. Cost 12 pounds 50p plus 5 pounds P&P. Cheap!)

What a bloody long wait for a NZ release.

Chris Knox

## Herbs Long Ago Warrior

Aotearoa. A land proud of its Polynesian connections. Didn't the nation glow with the fallout that accompanied the success of *Te Maori* in New York? But the attitude to Polynesian music is ambivalent. It's *hard* to cut it in a world dominated by plastic whites and dormant jocks. Herbs have survived and that's saying something.

Herbs have given Pacific reggae status. The message is pleasantly political. No raps, just reasoned crooning; trust one another, ban the bomb, count on kinship. The music is mellow, relaxed, a synthesis of Polynesian style and a gentle reggae beat.

*Long Ago*, Herbs' third local release, is assured and competent, successful on several levels and deserving of considerable radio time. Best of the 11 tracks are the title song, jaunty and dynamic, and 'Jah Reggae', with Caribbean angles and a horn riff like Sly Stone's 'Don't Call Me Nigger, Whitey'. 'Tahu's Song' and 'In the Ghetto' (not the Presley/Cave toon) on side two form a warm, easy



The Fall

bracket, fading into 'Goin' Home', an all-too-short traditional tattoo. Throughout, saxophone adds texture to the established Herbs sound.

*Long Ago* is Herbs' best effort yet and a fine place to learn the Pacific way.

Kia ora Herbs. Kia whakarongo aa koutou waiata.

David Taylor

## Bronski Beat The Age Of Consent Polydor

Bronski Beat are not inspiring! Capable? Yes. Worthy intentions? Yes. Inspiring? No!

Run through the tracks. Three songs about how hard it is to be gay, a couple of condemnations of society in general, an anti-war song (very popular this year), a couple of covers and an anti-religious song (on which they chicken out and pull their punches).

'Smalltown Boy' was a mildly intoxicating single, nothing earth-shattering, but a hell of a lot better than most of the crap on the radio but the follow-up 'Why' (indeed) sounded as though it should have been released two years. Both the singles are on the album and if you liked them you'll probably find the album pretty inoffensive.

Me? I got bored. There's an awful sense of futility/fatality about it. I'm sure most people are aware of the state of things and instead of ramming it further down their throats it would be nice to see some hope for a change. The only songs that aren't pessimistic or bleating are the Donna Summer covers, 'Need A Man Blues' and 'I



Bronski Beat

Feel Love' and Bronski Beat add nothing to the originals.

So I'm sorry, I liked 'Smalltown Boy' but the album just seems a bit pointless.

Barry Morris

## Aztec Camera Knife WEA

Second albums can be bad news, man. Consolidate or progress? Aztec Camera have decided to move on after last year's *High Land Hard Rain*, a delightful meeting of bedsit and garage land, the band wide-eyed with wonder at being in the studio.

Now they've grown up, or so they think, and to prove it Mark Knopfler, a superstar, has produced the new album. This is progress? So on *Knife* they've traded their past innocence, eagerness and leanness-to-please for a professional competence, sophistication and comfortable backwash. This is progress?

Putting Knopfler on the payroll is like getting Trevor Horn in to glamourise Orange Juice. Well, not quite, but get the idea? Incongruous and slightly sad. Sad, because as a songwriter Roddy Frame is developing into a real prize. His earnest acoustic rap, 'The Birth Of the True' and the slinky charm of 'Just Like the USA' and 'Head is Happy' reveal his fresh, quirky talent.

Elsewhere there are problems and it's probably too harsh to lay all the blame at Knopfler's door as, ultimately, the band has to accept final responsibility for the finished product. The result is that 'Knife', the title track and a beautiful anti-nuclear song, is too cushy, its

message required sparseness and less polish. 'Backwards and Forwards', another sensitive piece, is subjected to Dire Straits' 'Private Investigations' acoustic guitar sound — and that's not on — and the single 'All I Need Is Everything', not one of Aztec Camera's finest moments, fades on a Knopfler-inspired doodle.

Yet if it came to a fight I'd probably defend *Knife* because of Frame's songs and because he's shown that he's willing to move on up. But at the moment his ambitions have been misdirected.

George Kay

## The Cure Concert (and Curiosity) Fiction

Here it is. The Cure's first live album. It contains at least one song from from each of the seven albums preceeding it, including early gems like '10.15' and 'Killing An Arab'. So there's something here to satisfy every Cure fan...

*Concert* was recorded in May of this year, with the same lineup as we saw here two months ago, just before the departure of drummer Anderson. 'Shake Dog Shake' opens the album and immediately plunges the listener straight into Robert Smith's own little world of crazed caricatures, with lyrics like "... and dream of death and breathed like sick dogs." This is followed by a solid, striking version of 'Primary' and the hypnotic 'Charlotte Sometimes'. Then *Pornography's* prodigy, 'The Hanging Garden' is performed to spine-chilling perfection, a rare feat in concert or on record. And 'Give Me It', well... give me it.

If you have any gaps in your Cure collection then fill them in with this. The album excels in every field and Dave Allen's production is superb. But best of all is the free album *Curiosity*, which comes on the cassette version of the album.

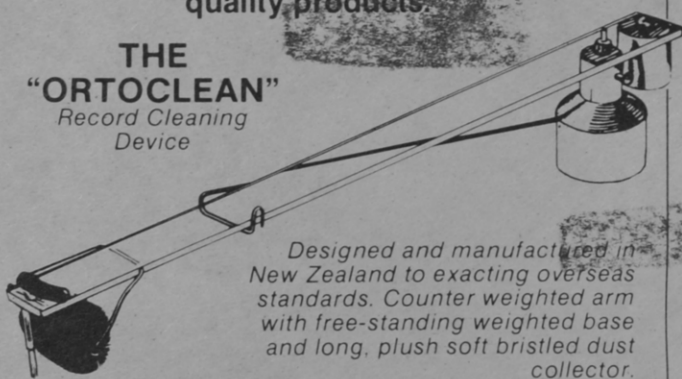
The 10 extra tracks were taken from Robert's "hilarious" cassette collection from 1977 to 1984 and are all live, apart from a Beatle-like demo version of 'Boys Don't Cry', recorded in May 1978. Also included are three never before released items — 'Heroin Face' (recorded at Crawley Rocket in December 77), 'All Mine' (May 82 in London) and 'Forever' (Paris this year). Utter bliss.

Vicky Bogie

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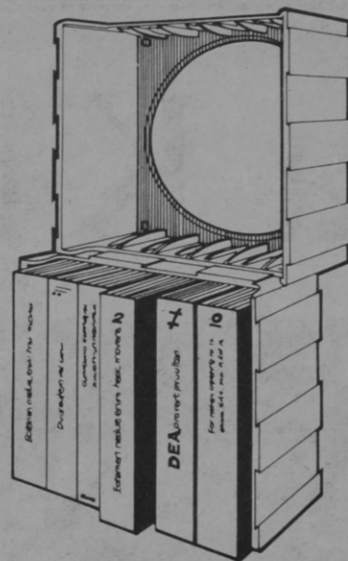
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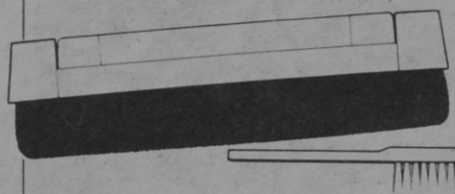
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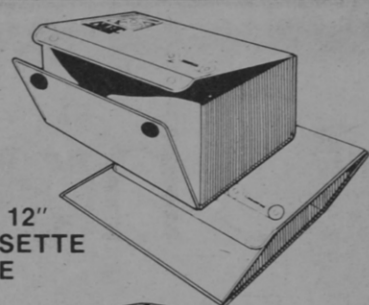
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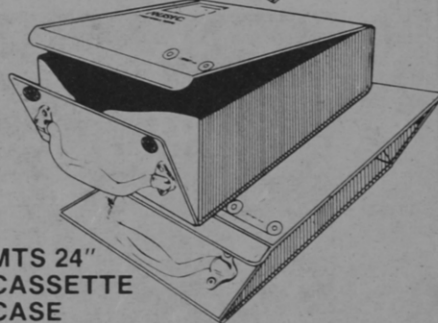
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