

# Records

## Commodores Nightshift Motown

Sometime last year I wrote off the Commodores. Their show in Auckland was embarrassing and the editor had given me an LP so dismal I'd returned it unreviewed. So how come I've been playing *Nightshift* so enjoyably and so often? Partly it's because of that title track, the most gloriously slinky slice of soul I've heard since Marvin himself was here.

But that's not all. Despite the album's sophisticated, upmarket production, most of the material has a strength in itself, whether it be yer standard, mellow cool (as in 'Janet') or funky getdown (the appropriately titled 'Play This Record Twice').

Many people had predicted the Commodores' demise when chief songwriter and singer Lionel Richie departed five or six years ago. Yet here the remaining four members, plus replacement singer, cheekily include a Ritchie-soundalike ballad — and pull it off. They didn't write it though.

And there may lie a reason for this album's success. Besides the band, those involved include 14 extra writers, 11 extra vocalists and 16 extra instrumentalists! But let's not begrudge the Commodores their renaissance. Welcome back guys, and thanks for the great tribute to Marvin and Jackie. **Peter Thomson**

## The Triffids Treeless Plain Jayrem

Welcome to the Triffids' *Treeless Plain* Magical Mystery Tour. It's back to the 60s, out into the arid desert, into the British independent charts and into the *NME* ("Australian flavour of the month for January 85.")

Side one of the Tour: climb on your blind 'Red Pony' and go West, young man. But life gets hard in 'Branded' — it's "cohorts of the devil" time now, leading into the release and sheer brilliance of 'My Baby Thinks She's A Train'. Lyricist Dave McComb warns the tourists: steer clear of 'Rosevel' — there's bad memories there. Now, time for brilliant demolition and desecration of Dylan — watch out for that soulful ol' tramp mumbling 'I Am A Lonesome Hobo'. Side one ends on another note of brilliance with 'Place In the Sun'.

'Plaything' opens part two of the journey across the plain, when Mystery Tourists meet the quietly tragic 'Old Ghost rider' and ride past the ol' 'Hanging Shed'. It's so hot on the plain and it's a 'Hell Of

A Summer', wrenching and tearing at your very existence. There's another of those terrible, sad creatures you meet on the Tour — a dash to Paris for the tale of 'Madeleine'. The finale is 'Nothing Can Take Your Place', with McComb's final statement exposing all, as he finishes: "Yes, my very survival's at stake."

*Treeless Plain* originated in Sydney in 1983, but despite the wait it still shows its class. The sound fits in with the current crop of great Aussie bands, but also has parallels with American bands like Rank and File and the Violent Femmes. A good and exciting start but the Triffids' real Tour isn't ending here. The more recent material released overseas is reportedly even better than this.

**Paul McKessar**



Midge Marsden in *Breakaways* days.

## Roger Fox Band & Midge Marsden Let The Good Times Roll Circular

Midge Marsden, eh! I remember him from the mid-60s, fronting the Breakaways, a band that looked like the Kinks and sounded like the Stones. Roger Fox, eh! I remember him from the early 70s, blowing for Quincy Conserve, NZ's answer to Chicago.

Now they've made an album together, combining Marsden's blues feels with Fox's jazz-rock influence. What we have is 11 blues and swing classics recorded live in the studio, accompanied by a 12-piece. The songs? Well, there's 'Caledonia' (which has to be

Midge's middle name by now), 'Flip, Flop and Fly', 'Tuxedo Junction', 'Texas Blues', 'Everyday (I Have the Blues)' ... get the picture? The musicianship shines through despite a flat production. If this is your cup of rosie lea, give it a try. You'll like it. Me? I'm waiting to see them live.

**Simon Elton**

## Midnight Star Planetary Invasion Solar Records

Remember 'Freak-A-Zoid'? Well, how can you forget when most of the up-tempo tracks are virtual re-makes, with the same bass and drum rhythms already?

But with something as wicked and nasty as 'Operator', I can forget such sins — great vocals over the top of a deep funk rhythm with corny talking bits about "finding my baby." What more can you ask for? I love it?

I also find the slinky 'Can You Stay With Me' attractive, with nice vocals from Belinda Lipscomb; which is more than I can say about the male vocals (maybe that's why they use those fucking synthetic vocoder vocals so much!).

The rest of the tracks move about in your basic dance and ballad groove, but don't really raise the temperature much. But each track has some strong point, be it the vocals of Ms Lipscomb or the scratching work of Poppa, a good album to play loud and annoy the heavy metal-loving neighbours!

**Kerry Buchanan**

## Alan Broadbent Trio Song Of Home Tartar

Very few local musicians have achieved overseas success on the scale of pianist/arranger Alan Broadbent. Since leaving Auckland on a *Down Beat* scholarship in 1966, Broadbent has gained considerable prestige in the US, winning magazine critics' polls and receiving four Grammy nominations for his arranging. While on a visit home last year, he renewed acquaintances with NZ's top rhythm section of Frank 'n' Andy. Together they played a few gigs, taped a session for TV's *Jazz Seen* and cut this album.

All praise to Kiwi Pacific Records for capturing the trio during its fleeting existence. (Otherwise there would only remain the

cassettes a few of us fans had made by hooking our tape decks up to the tele during *Jazz Seen*.) The material here ranges from fast-paced Sonny Rollins to tenderly rendered Ellingtonia. Yet even alongside such strong standards Broadbent's own 'Song Of Home' shines with a gentle strength.

As a performer his formidable arranging skills become focussed into two-handed harmonic intelligence. He swings with a touch somewhat like a less introspective Bill Evans. Gibson's awesome technique is never obtrusive (and particularly wonderful here on brushes) yet continues to lift the performances. Brown is his usual exemplary self, however a mediocre production has dropped his bass-work into the background.

To dwell further on the album's production values would smack of counting a gift horse's teeth, so instead let's just be grateful that these three fine musicians made it into a studio at all that day last June.

**Peter Thomson**

## New Edition MCA

Well how can you ever knock such a cute bunch of boys? I mean they've become America's latest teen dream, worked on the 'Stay in School' and 'Learn to Read' campaigns. The sleeve notes tell us that they ride their mopeds around Boston "figuring out ways to reward their parents and friends." I mean, how sweet can you get?

But the whole thing starts to look more like an advertising campaign than anything else. Nothing has been left to chance, from the dedication to their mothers, to pubescent sex ballads like 'Delicious', 'Baby Love' and 'My Secret (Didja Git It Yet?)' which steals the opening bars of the Jackson Five's 'I want You Back' — pretty clever, eh! Except the boys can't sing as well as the young Michael Jackson and the production sounds like a moped backfiring.

Those with a less cynical nature than myself will warm quickly to the saccharine delights of New Edition. I mean, if you like the Osmonds and you've never heard of Malcolm X, well here's New Edition for you.

**Kerry Buchanan**

## Dragon Greatest Hits Vol 1 (CBS)

A timely but coincidental release, for those wondering why Paul Hewson has drawn such tributes since his death. Ten tracks, recorded between 1976 and 1978, nine of them written or co-written by Hewson. Prime 1970s South Pacific pop music which has lost little of its appeal with time. Will there be a Vol. 2? We await new developments in the Dragon camp. **DC**

## Mike Nock Strata Soundtrack (Kiwi)

*Strata*, one of New Zealand's 'art' films, drew more praise for its soundtrack than for its visuals. The film was a rather bleak European-style work similar to *Vigil* in its concept. The music, with Nock on acoustic and electric pianos and synthesiser and Roger Sellers on percussion, will please ECM fans. **DC**

## David Lee Roth Crazy From the Heat (Warners)

Long before the advent of this four-track solo EP, Roth seemed to have assumed the role of rock video's class clown. (Remember those Van Halen gross-outs of last year?) And now, while the visual versions of 'California Girls' and 'Just A Gigolo' are exuberantly gung-ho enough to be humorous, alone on record they just sound crass. Nothing is added to the Beach Boys' original but some smirking vocal yelps and a dumb guitar. Similarly, 'Gigolo' (actually a two-in-one medley) swings with all the finesse of a sledgehammer. Surprisingly then — and mercifully — Roth restrains himself on a lovely old Lovin' Spoonful remake called 'Coconut Grove'. But then there's something called 'Easy Street' by the dreaded Dan Hartman — yep, all four tracks are covers — that is so bombastic not even another clip from 'Dave TV' could save it. **PT**

## Juluka Stand Your Ground (Warner Bros)

Proof that multi-racial music does exist in South Africa. This Johannesburg six-piece is already drawing favourable attention in Britain and Europe with its highly danceable Afro-funk and is now getting some push in the USA. The lyrics display a sociopolitical awareness unique to South Africans and 'Kilimanjaro' is jaunty enough to make a pop hit. Infectious. **DC**

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## Robert Plant shaken 'n' stirred

The third solo album from the legendary voice of Led Zeppelin. Plant's follow-up to his superb *Principle of Moments*. Once again he works with the talents of Robbie Blunt and co.



## The Associates Perhaps

The long-awaited album from Associates' Billy MacKenzie featuring his unique three octave voice. Tracks include 'Waiting For the Loveboat' and 'Those First Impressions'.



## Linda Thompson One Clear Moment

The next step on from Richard & Linda Thompson's sublime 'Shoot Out the Lights'. Players include Albert Lee and Jerry Donahue (Joan Armatrading band).



## Eric Clapton Behind the Sun

Eric Clapton meets with a new producer, Phil Collins and it fires! Features the hit 'Forever Man'.



## Howard Jones Dream Into Action

The Howard Jones album is here! Contains all his recent hits including 'Things Can Only Get Better' and 'Look Mama'.



## Divine The Story So Far...

Yay, Divine's greatest hits are here! 'I'm So Beautiful', 'Shoot Your Shot', 'You Think You're A Man', 'Shake It Up', 'Love Reaction'. Wow!



## Shalamar Heart Break

Howard Hewlett returns with Shalamar's new-lookers; Delisa David & Micki Free. Hits abound — classic 'Dancin' in the Sheets', 'My Girl Loves Me', 'Don't Get Stopped in Beverly Hills'.



## Midnight Star Planetary Invasion

Wombats beware! The 'Freak-A-Zoid' dudes are back with another intergalactic dancefloor invasion. Hot tracks: 'Operator', 'Scientific Love'.