



The Colour Field: Toby Lyons, Karl Shale, Terry Hall.



**Nick Cave
and the Bad Seeds
The First Born Is Dead
Mute**

"It's the blues mate," a progressively-minded friend of the Birthday Party's *Mutiny* at the time. Indeed, in places, it was, and now Nick Cave, like a good boy with a beef in his heart should, has made a blues album ...

Or, rather, an *observation* of the blues. Cave's always been a chronic observer, not least of his good self. A marvellous view of America is strained out through the album's most overtly humorous track, 'Wanted Man', with Cave spitting out a string of those delicious American place names — Syracuse, Talahassee, Baton Rouge ... — until "the one place I'm not wanted is the place that I call home." Get drunk and growl along with Nick! Likewise, 'Blind Lemon Jefferson' is about the *idea* of a bluesman than a bluesman — but it's Cave putting himself in the equation that gives this music character.

But those two and the album's other great song, the wailing prison blues 'Knockin' On Joe', make up the second side and that's certainly the side I've played. Not that Side One is bad, simply overshadowed. Cave typically goes for society's biggest, baddest (and therefore "best") totems in singing as a man who kills himself to preserve his love for a young girl he cannot bear to see grow any older in 'Little Girl Tree' and 'Train Long-Suffering' is a wretched broken-relationship song that doesn't really make it, call-and-response vocals and all. Playing the leader whose dignity turns into parody when his subjects learn to imitate him in 'Black Crow King', he's better, as he is in 'Tupelo', the bleak story of an accursed town, supposedly based on John Lee Hooker's talking blues of the same name.

Aspects of all this are silly but one presumes Cave knows that.

Even if you were to reject the whole voodoo, you'd have you give Cave credit for his utterly extraordinary dexterity with word and phrase and his choice of playmates (non-guitarist Blixa Bargeld in particular). The writer-as-singer Cohenisms of *From Her To Eternity* had just about exhausted their possibilities by the time the needle lifted at the end, but methinks the blues still holds some more for Mr Cave. Most enjoyable.

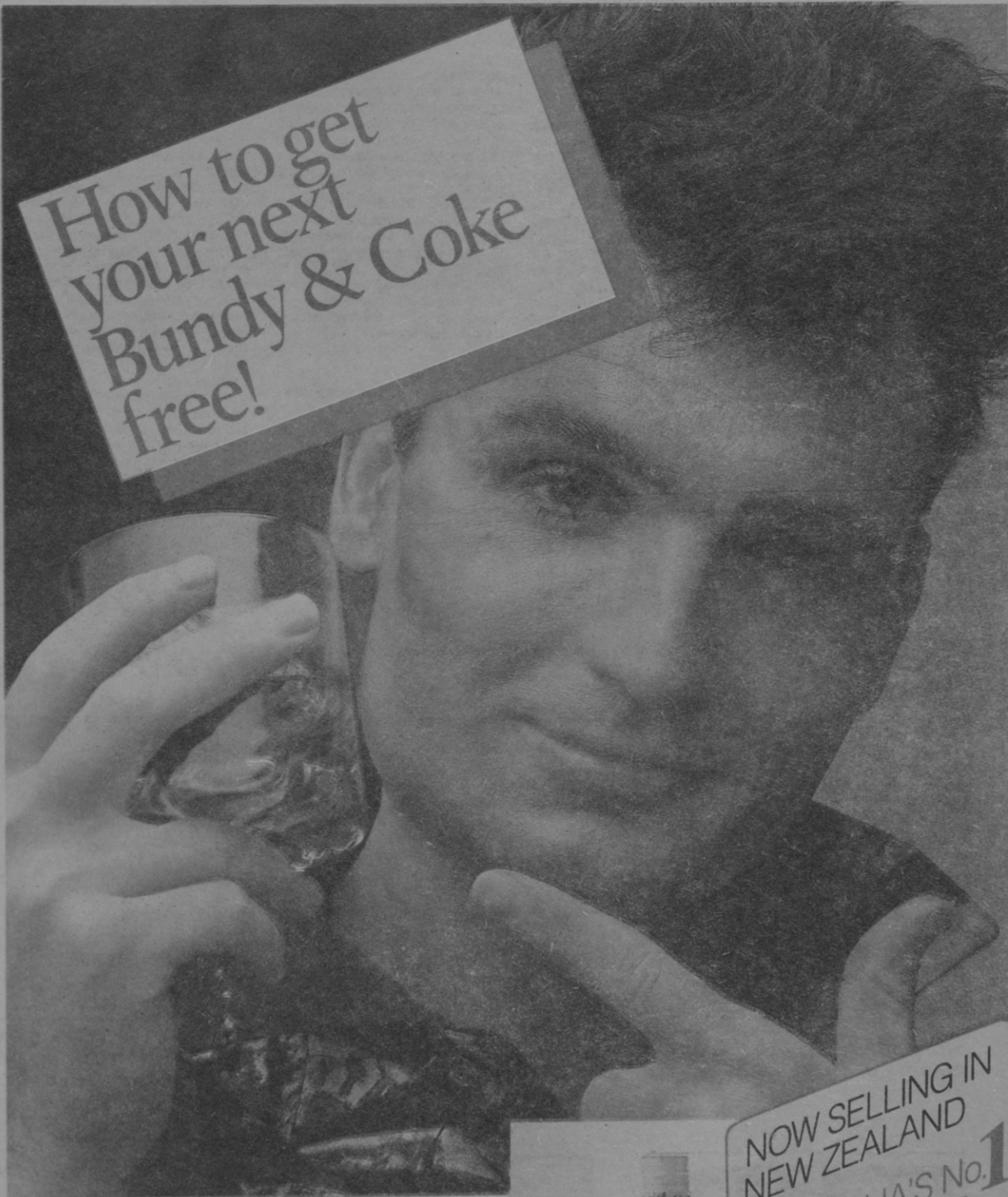
Russell Brown

**The Colourfield
Virgins and Philistines
Chrysalis**

Taken at face-value, Terry Hall's involvement in the fab world of pop reads like a lesson in how to avoid success. A few years ago, just when his voice and face were the Specials' hallmarks and 'Ghost Town' was quite nicely nestled at number one, he cut and ran with fellow vocalists Staples and Golding to form Fun Boy Three. And just when their political implorations were evolving into the more varied and satisfying commercial bent of *Waiting* and America looked ripe for the kill, Hall, tired of carrying the other two, left and formed the Colourfield with keyboard player Toby Lyons and bassist Karl Shale.

Although Lyons is 50 per cent of the writing partnership, in most senses *Virgins and Philistines* is a continuation of Hall's peculiar musical hybrid. Distrustful of pop, he's always freely admitted to stealing ideas from the likes of Andy Williams, Jack Jones and Cleo Laine, y'know, Singers. So, plagiarism, Hall's own droll style and Lyons' musical structures combine to produce some special moments on this debut.

The delicately sculpted trilogy of domestic mini-melodramas on Side Two, 'Hammond Song', 'Virgins and Philistines' and 'Armchair Theatre' is the core of an album of deft sophistication. 'Yours Sin-



This is the scene.

You're down at the local, checking out a couple of bands and having a few drinks with a few friends.

Now you know how the conversation always goes . . . albums, videos, groups, that sort of thing. Casually you ask someone, "What's your favourite group?" It's a sure thing that they'll ask you, "What's yours?"

That's your cue!

"I'll have a Bundy rum and Coke, thanks!"

It works every time.

cerely' springs a surprise Herb Alpert trumpet flurry. 'Take' is the disruption to Hall's homely admissions on *Waiting*'s 'We're Having All the Fun', and 'Cruel Circus' continues the music hall burlesque style of making a serious point that paid off so well on 'The Farmyard Connection'.

Virgins and Philistines isn't a flawless album, Hall is too dry by nature and too suspicious of pop to use its sparkle to his benefit, but as an antidote for the loudness and tastelessness of the times it is near perfect.

George Kay

**Explorers
The Explorers
Virgin**

In which the ghost of Phil Collins and The Unknown Pink Floyd Fan infiltrates the most level-headed of musical camps and renders Mackay and Manzanera's solo efforts rotten and listless. Shame, shame, shame; I'd get into their self-indulgence any day (*Resolving Contradictions, Diamond Head, Primitive Guitars*) as would most others, so why dress up mature musicianship in the dickhead guise of Tears For Fears

et al?

The cosmetic moves are made all the more painful by the persistence of good things on the album; the riff on 'Lorelei', for instance, or the drumming and guitar on 'Ship Of Fools', complete things in themselves. But, true to good business sense, all are weighed down with the dead albatross of James Wraith, heartily hurling vocals that would embarrass Nik Kershaw (witness the titles; 'Soul Fantasy', 'Robert Louis Stevenson', 'Venus De Milo') in a manner too close to Ferry to really justify his existence at all.

There is one very real hope for the persistent, and that is that they release 12" singles with B-sides and the vocals mixed out, which I personally will be rushing to buy. Surely the whole point of getting older is to allow yourself to become even more self-indulgent, rather than paying half-hearted lip service to pointless commercial straitjackets? Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drop — what a crying bloody shame. Mop up your tears with *Cupid and Psyche* and the new Bryan Ferry: triumphant pop and self-indulgence respectively.

Chad Taylor

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