

Records

The Verlaines Hallelujah All the Way Home Flying Nun

It's 6.18am on a Monday. I am sitting on the roof of *Rip It Up's* office, looking down three floors to Queen St, writing a review of the Verlaines' album. The city is just beginning to move — a street-cleaner waterblasts the footpaths before they're full of people.

The first thing about *Hallelujah All the Way Home* is that it's yer actual high-fidelity record and needs to be played LOUD. Not that it's all noisy or anything, but, like orchestral music, it depends on dynamics to create its mood. It should be played loud enough for the guitars to bash and crash around your ears, enough to draw a sharp con-

trast against the quieter passages. The closing track, 'Ballad of Harry Noryb', pretty much sums up the album in this and other respects — by the time it wails plaintively off into the void, a hail of huge electric guitar will have come crashing down on you, the music telling as much of a story as the words.

Narrative sing structure is a feature of the record; the words and music do a kind of duet on telling the stories. Roles get blurred, the music's a bit literal and the words a bit musical. And they can hide away little secrets — 'Don't Send Me Away' is a jauntily phrased little folk tune that bears some fairly pungent observations (and these are his *friends* Graeme Downes is writing about). The most abrasive and propulsive track is 'Lying In State', a song written back when Downes probably wanted to be the Clean. And when

he still had problems on the romantic front: "You don't talk, and what's worse / You take your car keys out of your purse," is a very nice couplet, don't you think? As has always been the case with the Verlaines, the lyrics generally read well on their own, a fairly rare thing in rock 'n' roll.

The preparation before the recording of this album was comprehensive and it shows. There's a very strong impression that the Verlaines achieved pretty much what they set out to do. They certainly play well, and at least one guest musician was surprised to be handed a written score for her part: "Most bands just say 'play something over that!'" The result is that as well as the *sounds* being right, touches like the horn line in 'For the Love of Ash Grey' are *just so*. If the band lost anything in spontaneity, they more than made up for it in simply getting

their ideas across so bloody well.

Also, as the sleeve art makes clear, *Hallelujah* is a whole beast. If you play it from the start of side one to the end of side two, it announces itself, unravels and finally elegantly resolves itself in 'Noryb' (even if the resolution's only resignation).

A bonus too: it makes seeing the Verlaines live a lot more fun — you know the songs and can latch onto the structures and note and enjoy the differences in the live beast.

Okay, I like this sort of thing, but I think on any terms *Hallelujah* is a great album. I think it's my favourite NZ album ... and the old city's beginning to grrowl along with itself ...

Russell Brown

Neil's Heavy Concept Album

Hullo vegetables! Like, it's Neil's album, right, and he's from *The Young Ones*. Wow. Two sides of it,

right; quite surprising really when you consider how one episode of the same series can peter out rather quickly (or is it just that you peter out because it's so late?), anyway, it does in bits, right, so he's padded it out with electronic versions of really hippy songs, yeah! But the best bit is, right, that this album sounds better than anything Pink Floyd have ever done (since that one with the pink cover, anyway) and goes on to sound like the Dream Academy! Right on! Ever heard of "many a true word being spoken in jest"? So easy with the HM jokes, Mr Planer, or should I say Careful With That Axe, Nigel ...

CT

Shake Summation

Fetus Productions

The Perfect Product (Flying Nun)

A colleague in this paper coined the term "rockin' experimentalism" to sum up Fetus Productions — and that's about as good a definition of this music as you'll get. 'Flicker' (the one with the video) is a sly come-hither song of many parts — part substance and part sleight of hand. 'Backbeat' has a riff that's so heavy ... just bristles with sass 'n' badness. As soon as you hear 'Anthem' you'll know why it is so named — another indication of a fair degree of smarts on

Jed Town's part as regards how peoples' listening bits operate. Jed wants this record to be a Top 10 hit, and if it's not likely, it should be possible, because down through the weirdness, at least two of these songs are pop songs, and sparkingly recorded ones at that. Actually, I'll just leave it at saying this record is *fab*.

Peking Man

Room That Echoes (CBS)

Wow — A NZ mainstream pop record with *all* the elements. A good song with an insanely catchy chorus, well sung and blessed with a very good production. The rhythm section seems to have been sat on a bit so the song doesn't sound too weird for radio — the bass and at least part of the drums seem to have been played on Bruce Lynch's Emulator, which accounts for the Big Sound. Oh yeah, I'm talking about the tight, functional 7" version here — the 6 min 30 extended mix, as most such inflations of pop songs are, is meandering and tensionless, but I suppose it's the thing to do.

Patea Maori Club

E Papa (Maui)

Again, the unlikely and effective combination of rich, deep massed vocals and a really corny drum machine programme. We get three versions of the old stick game song, from the bobbling reggae feel of the 'Traditional' version, through the bigger 'n' badder Part 2 to the sprightly and gappy 'UK Club Mix'. Simple and appealing, but I think the possibilities of

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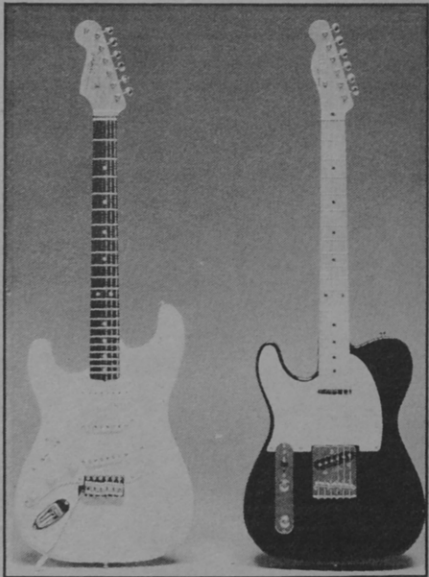
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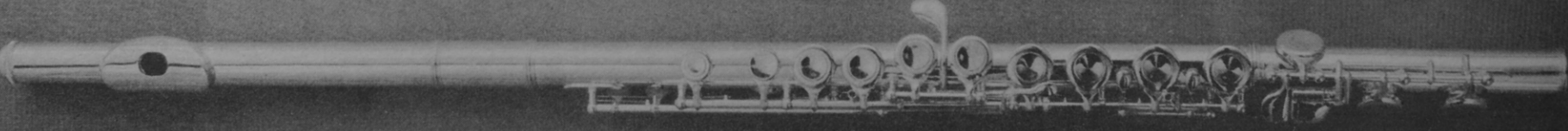
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