

# Records

**Phantom, Rocker and Slick**  
EMI

From the remnants of the Stray Cats come rhythm section Slim Jim Phantom and Lee Rocker, to join forces with fast guitar hero and one-time Bowie sideman Earl Slick.

Their debut album is not as inspired as one might have hoped. The songs just don't quite make it. Both melody and vocal delivery are all too often forced and uninspired, particularly on the two slower numbers.

Indeed, the singer often seems like an intruder in a band that is

only truly happy when the pace is full on, the amps are full up, and the lead guitarist is in full fury. They do, however, capture a good live feel on record and, like a good pub band, they know their rock 'n' roll. There's guitar solos galore, if that's your thing, and at times it sounds as if Keith Richards is helping out on more than just the one track for which they give him credit.

I wonder if such an observation would bother them? Probably not. They sound like they're having too good a time to care.

**Grant Scott**

**Tony Baker**  
**Scandinavian Suite**  
Tartar

Tony Baker is currently a musi-

cal director for TVNZ. He is also a talented and prolific composer/arranger and a very fine alto saxophonist (whose live performances are not nearly as often as we'd like these days). Last year he was commissioned by Radio NZ to write a work for saxophone and orchestra. The result is the 30 minute suite commemorating the contribution made to New Zealand by early settlers from various parts of Scandinavia. The work is in five parts and features Colin Hemmingson on tenor sax, a large selection of the string and woodwind sections of the NZSO and a fine jazz quartet.

Attempts to combine the intricately wrought European structures of orchestral music with the American improvisations of jazz have been going on since the 1950s. The usual results of such attempts at a "third stream" have been unsatisfying to both traditions but *Scandinavian Suite* fares better than most. Baker has avoided jarring juxtapositions of style and achieved many passages of evocative beauty, both in passionate intensity and in tranquil reflection.

Hemmingson, a member of the NZSO as well as a leading jazz musician, is in his usual exemplary form, as is that marvellous guitarist Martin Winch. Moreover the whole performance has been

remarkably well recorded. (The album is completed by three other pieces featuring Hemmingson and orchestra though at times these veer close to cosy MOR.)

**Peter Thomson**

**Gregory Isaacs**  
**Slum Dub (Serengeti)**

Another intriguing release by Jayrem, this one dating back to 1978. To my knowledge, it's the first dub album to gain local release, so it must be considered a breakthrough. Prince Jammy and the Channel One Posse weaving spells on track which originally appeared on the *Cool Ruler* LP. Buy, and give encouragement. DC

**The Best of the Sir Douglas Quintet (Bigtime)**

This set brings together material from the most fertile period (late 60s-early 70s) of Doug Sahm's long and varied career. His ability to create a cohesive blend of rock 'n' roll, blues, Texas border music, country and other influences is, at its best, unmatched. There may be better single albums (*1 Plus 1* etc, *Together After Five*, perhaps), but the newcomer would do well to start here. Included are 'She's About a Mover', 'Mendocino', 'Dynamite Woman', the wonderful country lament 'Texas Me', and, especially, a sinuous 'Wasted Days and Wasted Nights'. KW

**Shriekback**  
**Oil and Gold (Arista)**

The sound of the computer age meets funk meets turgid English eccentrics meets black humour not gold. What was that about oil and water? Shriekback are intelligent, 'Lined Up' proved that. But on their fourth album, obliqueness, humour and the allegorical deadness of 'Malaria', 'Fish Below the Ice' or 'Hammerheads' can't save the mechanical emptiness of much of the music. Their best songs like the undulating 'This Big Hush' or 'The Only Thing That Shines' develop from the soundscape of Eno's *Another Green World*. That's where their real potential lies. GK

**Stevie Nicks**  
**Rock A Little (Modern)**

Third solo album from the ex-Fleetwood Mac sex symbol, who has kept her profile up with her solo work, her duets (both live and studio) with Tom Petty and her constant presence at many benefit concerts throughout the US. What we have here is more of the same: the stadium rocker ('I Can't Wait') and the lovely ballad ('Rock A Little (Go Ahead Lily)'). The epic poem ('The Nightmare') and the Tom Petty flavoured rock 'n' roller ('Imperial Hotel'). More songs for lovers and other strangers. No immediate hits but gets better all the time. SGE

**Paul Kelly**  
**Post (White Label)**

An album in the true singer-songwriter tradition, from a critically lauded Australian who usually fronts his own band, the Dots. Kelly writes about his life experiences, and uses basically acoustic guitar, occasionally embellished with piano, sax, piano accordion and bass guitar. His themes are his childhood days in Adelaide, schooldays, love lost and drug addiction. A rare look into another's soul ... dedicated to Paul Hewson. SGE

**A-Ha**  
**A-Hunting High and Low (Warners)**

Take three photogenic Norwegians, put them through the Ultravox-Duran Duran easy listening course and presto you've got a band with 'Take On Me', a single that's been cleaning up the pop charts in the Western World. Catchy fluff and harmless plagiarism from the dying vestiges of British synth pop seem to be the prerequisites for overnight stardom. GK

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