

Records

Feargal Sharkey
Virgin

Just over two years ago, Feargal Sharkey left the Undertones, the World's Greatest Band, to carve out his own immortality. Since then the one-off magical collaboration with Vince Clarke on 'Never Never' and a couple of other singles ('Listen To Your Father' and 'Loving You') were left to pay the bills while Sharkey planned his strategy for his first fully-fledged solo album.

And strategy it is. Recorded in London but mixed in in LA by Shelly Yakus (Petty's engineer), it features songs by the new hyped-up female sensation, Maria McKee (the OK hit single 'A Good Heart'), Benmont Tench's pushy 'You Little Thief', a plodding gift from Chrissie Hynde, 'Made To Measure', and another version of Womack's 'It's All Over Now'.

Get the (mid-Atlantic) drift? With the Undertones, Sharkey never put pen to paper, so producer, the Eurhythmics' Dave Stewart, provides the music styles for four of Sharkey's lyrics. 'Love and Hate' tries the blues with a little bit of venom almost climbing above the production, but on the R&B of 'Ghost Train' and the disco swish of 'Ashes and Diamonds' Stewart betrays his true hand as only a competent stylist.

Being charitable for a moment, it's gotta be said that Sharkey's voice still cuts to the quick and whatever he does now is bound to look dim beside the genius of the Undertones at their best. But hiring a cast of thousands of radio priests can only ensure commercial, not critical favour. At the moment he can't have it both ways.

George Kay

Newcleus
Space Is the Place
Sunnyview

Space Is the Place is hardly the new frontier (even the name seems familiar); more a case of beaming down for a giggle. Newcleus's last album remained in my memory for its great sense of fun and this album possesses the same.

'Let's Jam' is the champion track by far, similar to the Funk Fusion Band in its busy, grinning bustle. 'Why' might hold your attention on a big club system but I doubt it; the goods remain undelivered until side two's 'I Wanna Be a B-Boy' and 'Teknology'. Kraftwerk are a huge influence and a few riffs from *Computer World* creep through, which is never a bad thing.

What is a bad thing is bad rapping, and the remaining tracks are full of it. After hearing L.L. Cool J and Doctor Jeckyll & Mr Hyde, this stuff *crawls*; only on 'Let's Jam' is the phantom MC saved by slick musicianship. Pop may have taken 40 or so years to arrive at its present position of dull retrospect and indecision; Rap has done so in about two. Even a passing mention of 'Sucker MCs' or 'Wavin' your hands in Thuh air makes heads whirl in exasperation. To get away with rapping, you have to be damn good.

But despite their cliches and plagiarism, Newcleus have just the right slap-happy silliness to escape the galaxy unscathed. The world may be swathed in hopelessness and struggle, but it moves to the beat of cheerful crooners like Luther Vandross, waiting for Muh bu-bu-bu-bu baaaybee or wondering whether or not to take home that someone they've been dancing with all night long. Irresponsible but true. *Space Is the Place* should keep you happy enough.

Chad Taylor



THE WATERBOYS

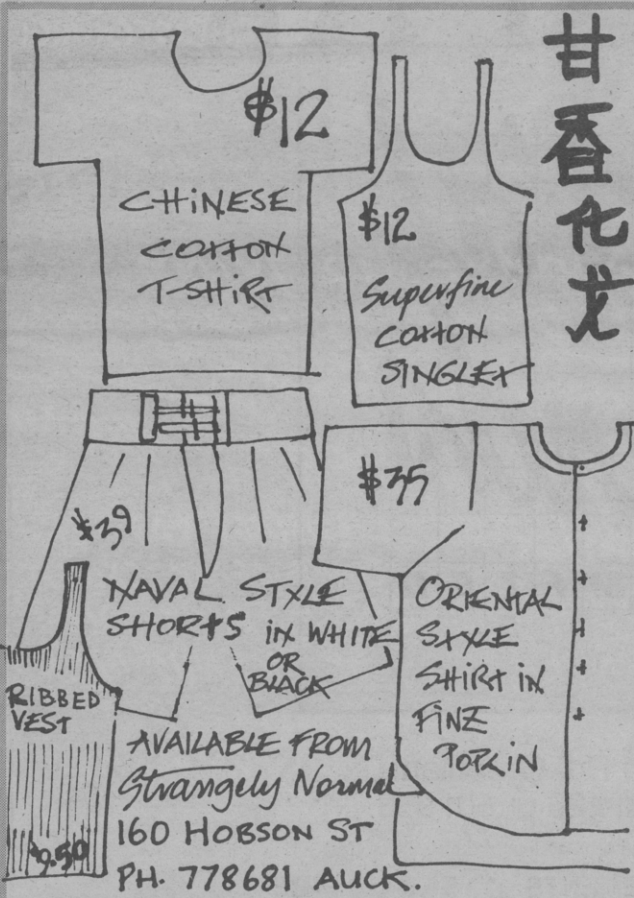
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