

Records

Playthings Flying Nun

The Playthings were David Toland, Janine Saunderson, Jay Clarkson and the late Nicky Carter, to whom this album is dedicated. Prior to this, their output consisted of a couple of singles released early this decade. Recorded live in pulse pounding mono! This Playthings thing is a retrospective look back to the Gladstone in May of 81.

Like any good gig, the Playthings' set here gathers momentum as it goes on. The Playthings' brand of thrashy pop flits from mood to mood, and keeps the listener engaged throughout.

Highlights are Jay Clarkson's 'Personality Squares', and then the different instrumentation of Nicky Carter's flute on 'Reception' and his sax on the slower closing track 'Justified'.

Now, the other Playthings have gone their different ways, with only Jay Clarkson still involved in making music, but this LP is a good testament, and as the cover says, it's better late than never. Definitely so.

Paul McKessar

Culture Club From Luxury to Heartache Virgin

You asked for sex, they gave you a cup of tea. You wanted beauty, and then podgy George cut his dreads off and announced an affair with the drummer. You wanted over-produced extravaganzas and they gave you 'Karma Chameleon'. Now the pop world screams for a daring sow's ear (eg: the J&M Chain) and Culture Club have given you a silk purse.

The cool simplicity of 'Do You Really Want to Hurt Me' and the consequent acclaim may seem long ago, but the people behind it are alive and well, with 10 tracks to prove it. No tricks, no gadgets, nothing up the lame sleeve. *From Luxury to Heartache* is an album whose maturity and security is so even as to be a criticism.

Side two in particular, with the gems of 'Reasons' (the next 'Do You Really ...'), 'Too Bad' and 'Sexuality' (very much in the style of Scritti Politti's *Songs to Remember*), is bouncy, fresh and clean. Beneath their trademark of Christmas carol riffs lies the music of Stevie Wonder and Chaka Khan. Above, an often flat George and dodgy lyrics, but even the mistakes on this album ('Come Clean') sound confident, which is nothing short of a mira-

cle for a band so targeted by the media.

The album's fate, however, is not as obvious as its worth. Its release in the only Western country in the world without rock videos must surely be a handicap to any band as visual as Culture Club. The album lacks an obvious stylistic focus, too, (a paradoxical sign of its maturity), and no hooks often means a sinker. *From Luxury to Heartache* is one of the best pop albums released this year and it would be a tragedy to see it fail. Perhaps night-clubs will pick up on 'Reasons', 'Too Bad' and 'Sexuality', thus keep heads above water for a while longer. Ain't the pop world cruel?

Chad Taylor

National Anthem One Day Different Reaction

The songwriting core of locals National Anthem, Tony Johns and Craig Smith-Pilling, have affiliations that go back to early 80s pup-pop-rock. They write and sing the words and play the guitars. The rhythm section on their debut album have spent time individually in two of New Zealand's premier popular bands; bass in Split Enz and drums in Dance Exponents. Adding these facts and a few educated guesses, I expected another mainstream

Kiwi-style pop record.

Not entirely the case.

What's on offer is a package containing re-mixes of two earlier releases, 'Chapter One' and 'Please Say Something', plus a swag of moody guitar rock songs straining to be anthems. The record's air is sombre and quite foreboding (dare one say depressing?).

The lyrics are no small contributor to this feeling, dwelling as they do on the darker aspects of the human condition — frailties, depression, paranoia etc, but overall too brooding, too insular. I found it taxing to come up with a social/recreational use for this album: it's too down for partying, too loud to converse over, too hard to dance to. Conclusion — a serious album!

Reaction (no pun intended) is what they're trying to provoke. In an interview Johns said National Anthem considered themselves very political, but it was/is personal politics — the ways people work — they were interested in. Their best song to date, 'Please Say Something', is a shining example of just how good National Anthem can be when all the factors in their music are balanced just right. A spell-binding song which, to my mind, none of the newer material on the album surpasses.

One Day Different, for all its

sombreness, is an undoubtedly honest record both in execution and content. Ignore the ghosts of the British anthem bands that flit through the odd song, there is value to be had here. This album is a different tack from the run-of-the-mill indigenous mainstream but a good listen is rewarding. Now more than ever New Zealand music needs support if we are to have any to call our own again. 'One Day Different' is an opportunity to check out a couple of local lads with a different page to write.

Brendon Fitzgerald

Alexander O'Neal CBS

Modern soul music is a svelte and sensual creature. Born from the early beauty of Clyde McPhatter and the soft crys of Garnett Mimms, the modern soul voice is soft and warm. Compared to the heady passion of Southern gospel belters, modern soul is positively restrained in its pleadings.

Top male soul stylists at the moment for me are Luther Vandross and Freddie Jackson. Now we have Alexander O'Neal with his cult debut album, with a voice like a ride in a Cadillac Coupe De Ville.

Alexander used to be lead vocals in Minneapolis's Flyte-Time, which under Prince's control be-

came the Time — minus Alexander. Former members also included Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis who have produced Alexander's album.

The first side features four intense ballads, slightly sad but always glamorous. Starting with 'A Broken Heart Can Mend', a glorious slice of melancholy that drips soul. A whole side of faultless ballads, however the flow and mood is misplaced by the inclusion of the far too long 'Innocent' medley that opens side two. It has its moments but the heavy guitar solos and the up-tempo beat spoil the feel of the rest of the album. But things get restored with 'What's Missing', another soul gem that is similar to Luther Vandross's style.

A stylish and often chilling album of contemporary soul music designed to thrill even the hardest of hearts.

Kerry Buchanan

Alexei Sayle Panic CBS

Comedy you can dance to is a great change from just sitting around listening. I'm still working on the steps to 'Didn't You Kill My Brother' ... trouble is there's damn all else on this album I want for either reason. Chaz Jankel's music is just a pale rehash from his

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



ROBERT PALMER

NEW ALBUM

RIPTIDE

Features US # 1 'ADDICTED TO LOVE'
(Single available on 7" & 12")



Rare Record Auction

Picture Discs, Shapes, Live Recordings

Includes:

BEATLES, Broadcasts, Picture Disc
BEATLES, Sgt. Peppers, Pic Disc
BEATLES, Abbey Road, Pic Disc
JOHN LENNON, Telecasts, Pic Disc
WHO, Scary Tales, Double LP
STONES, East West
DIRE STRAITS, In The Gallery
DEEP PURPLE, Prisoners of Rock
... and many more

For free list write to
Record Auction
Box 9538, Hamilton



THE MUSIC SCHOOL

Enrol for 3rd Term
— July 14th

Orientation: June 26 at 5.30pm

Ph: 768 115

SOUND THINKING

Prescriptions for
ailing sounds
coming from the body.



Special elixirs from the Martin Guitar Company

Sole NZ Distributor: LYN McALLISTER MUSIC LTD.
PO Box 39-143, Auckland West. Ph: (09) 34-936.