

# Records

## Tales from the Brothers Finn

### Crowded House Capitol

Following hard on the heels of brother Tim's *Big Canoe* comes Neil Finn's Crowded House band and album — the other half of the Split Enz dichotomy. His introduction as a replacement to the ubiquitous Phil Judd gave the band a pop dimension that carried Split Enz into the money, right from 'I Got You' through to quality sweets like 'One Step Ahead,' 'History Never Repeats,' and 'I Walk Away,' it's been obvious that Finn has developed into one crafty tunesmith.

So when Split Enz retired big things were expected from Neil Mullane Finn, and on Crowded House big things have been delivered. Recorded in LA and produced by Mitchell Froom, the album rarely falls below par. 'World Where You Live,' 'Now We're Getting Somewhere,' 'Something So Strong,' 'Hole in the River,' and 'Tombstone' are as good as anything Finn has written; strong tunes well anchored by drummer Paul Hester and bassist Nicholas Seymour.

'I Walk Away' is re-worked, but the album's high spot has to be 'Don't Dream It's Over,' a classy ballad with a great tune wrapped around the chorus and with Mitchell Froom's keyboards adding the finishing touches.

Of the 10 songs here, only three don't make it ('Mean to Me,' 'Love You 'Til the Day I Die,' and 'That's What I Call Love' are pretty dodgy) leaving a tally of seven out of 10. A pass by any standards.

George Kay

### Tim Finn Big Canoe Virgin

I suppose that it's some sort of American adage that dictates if you stick around long enough then your present product will eventually pay for past achievements.

Tim Finn's past is too well-known

to be worth reiterating here, suffice to say that he's long since kissed goodbye to the face of inspiration and the need to succeed for the big consolation of professionalism and marketable craftsmanship.

Finn's talents as a singer/songwriter have always been sufficiently broad-based to allow him to tackle in style the various musical genres of the day. Add to that agility the slick and sumptuous production of Nick Launay (previous experience INXS and Midnight Oil) and the words of English playwright Jeremy Brock, then you've almost arrived at *Big Canoe*.

To carry much of the album, Finn has relied on an executive funk that's designed to carry the tunes just above the format, but on 'Spiritual Hunger' and the narrative 'Timmy' the formula wins, and on 'So Deep' and 'Water Into Wine' the hooks in the choruses almost salvage the songs. The best moments lie with the ballads, notably the single 'No Thunder, No Fire, No Rain,' the best song here, and 'Hyacinth,' where Finn's melody overcomes the soft-focused romantic corn of Brock's lyrics, a weakness that continually sinks *Big Canoe*.

On the inside lyric sheet Tim is decked out in a suit and turtle-neck and he's looking well, and that's good, he deserves it, you can't wear circus outfits forever. But on *Big Canoe* there's way too much business before passion.

George Kay

### The Saints All Fools Day Mushroom

Quality rock, okay? Chris Bailey, a bit of an Oz-Frog sort of mixed-up character approaching 30 who's made *some* (not just some) albums in his time under the Saints' moniker, wraps a huge noise around his wonderful Jagger-like voice and acoustic guitar and it's *al-right*.

The Saints here are Bailey plus original drummer Ivor Hay, and guitarist Richard Burgmann and Archie Larizza, with numerous orchestral and vocal backing to make *All Fools Day* as big and fantastic as it is ...

*All Fools Day* doesn't meander, it's carefully structured and it's gonna hold your attention, right



Peter Gabriel

from the first song and single 'Just Like Fire Would,' through full-on tracks like 'First Time' and 'Temple of the Lord,' "roots exploring" 'Celtic Ballad' and the final song 'All Fools Day,' where Bailey, having wrapped (all sorts of) rock, the blues, folk and traditional music round his erudite and acute observations, has to have the last laugh when "we can all join together/on All Fools Day."

Looking back at all the good (or rave ...) reviews one might write over a period of time, it's hard to make a record sound like it is *that* much better than the rest, cos no amount of superlatives could do it — just buy *All Fools Day* and see.

Paul McKessar

### The Cramps A Date with Elvis Big Beat

*A Date with Elvis* opens with 'How Far Can Too Far Go?,' which is second gear. The next track is musically heating up, but Lux: "Do a swan-dive on that jewel/Put it in my satchel then I'll lay a patch/Aw baby I'm just talkin' bout that hot pearl snatch"?? — spare us, *pleez*. But no, next up a bunch of kids are there joining in with the "people ain't no good" chorus. *Lux Interior* thinks *other people* ain't no good? HA!

Okay! Okay! Now 'What's Inside a Girl?' and 'Can Your Pussy Do the Dog?' let Ivy and Nick Knox lead the way, maybe lacking a bit of their normal grunginess in the LA studio production, but still ... ignore Lux's infatuations, an' it's da

toons! *A Date with Elvis* starts to heat up by the time you flip it over

... 'Kizmiatz' is a cool Hawaiian rock and roll ballad that'd be the best thing here, followed by my favourite — 'Coin-fed Dames,' with Lux chasing gals all round the farm. But that's where the fun stops, cos 'Chicken' is strict-rockin'-token-novelty-filler material, and 'Hot Pool of) Woman-need' and 'Aloha from Hell' just ain't the goods. It leaves you with not a helluva lot of classic Cramps — enough for me to be satisfied with *A Date with Elvis*, but not much more ...

And then just to prove that they're still the crassest B-grade horror rock'n'rollers of all, they finish with 'It's Just That Song' — take it (with a teaspoon of formaldehyde perhaps?) or leave it.

Paul McKessar

### Genesis Invisible Touch Charisma Peter Gabriel So Charisma

Genesis spawned the talents of Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins, and there is no doubt in my mind that their best work took place when Gabriel was fronting the band. In fact the continued existence of Genesis, emasculated as it is, must be questioned. Collins is well established in his own right as a solo performer and the band, on the evidence of the latest record, seem merely a vehicle for his ideas.

Genesis rely on a smooth pop sound interspersed with some lip service to the past, eg: the two-part 'Domino,' and an interesting instrumental 'The Brazilian,' which reeks of early Gabriel offerings. However, 'Invisible Touch,' 'In Too Deep,' 'Throwing it all Away' and 'Anything She Does,' have all the hallmarks of the successful formula established on *No Jacket Required*. In essence, competent pop songs which are Collins forte, and should guarantee the album a healthy chart position.

Gabriel's *So* is an entirely different proposition, filled with rich textured songs, a myriad of rhythms drawing on the cultures of various countries and a lyrical sense of justice and compassion. The sin-

gle 'Sledgehammer' conjures up the spirit of 60s soul music, 'Red Rain' is trance-like in its swirling rhythms, 'Don't Give Up' features a gorgeous duet with Kate Bush, 'Mercy Street' bleeds in its cry for justice, 'We Do What We're Told' is bleak in the tradition of 'Lead a Normal Life' from *PG3*.

Gabriel has not produced a dud album, and *So* is right up to the standard of his best work. It's accessibility should ensure a wider audience than he has had in the past. One complaint I have involves the irritating habit of the cassette and CD having an extra track that is not on the LP version. The missing track is an excellent duet with Laurie Anderson titled 'This is the Picture,' hence buyers are directed towards the cassette or CD. Compensation for LP buyers is the complete lyric sheet. Whichever you buy, you won't be disappointed. Undoubtedly one of the albums of 1986. Genesis are pale in comparison.

David Perkins

### Madonna True Blue Sire

My second album pressed on blue vinyl this year. Now, before we get all nasty, let's remember that the defensive whinings of Whitney Houston are at No 1 at time of writing, that Culture Club's new gem *From Luxury to Heartache* is being ignored and Dire Straits have a new single. Does Madonna now seem so bad? Not at all.

Her first self-titled album should have been her *Controversy*, but she was never given the rope. If Prince gets sleazy, he's being adventurous but if a white Brooklyn woman gets sleazy she's being a discredit to the feminist movement. Boy Toys are out; songs like 'I Wanna Jack U Off' are in.

Madonna is an antidote to the safe, safe croonings of Sade. *True Blue* has no pretensions; it aims to be nothing but a healthy pop album. Of course, "greats" like Miles Davis have never recorded a muzak version of 'Holiday' (as he did with 'Time After Time'). Why have two singers so close in style as Cyndi Lauper and Madonna been given such opposing approval by the pop cogniscenti? Is it because everyone feels safer with a slightly pudgy and goofy woman? Just maybe?

Madonna has teeth. Sharp, cal-

culating ones. The throaty funk of 'Open Your Heart' and the wit of 'White Heat'; in which the love-as-crime metaphor is hilariously deflated with "C'mon, make my day". Nile Rodgers' 'Let's Go Out Tonight' is a strong influence on 'Where's the Party' but the title track is a lazy doo-wop number more in the style of Frankie Valli. 'Jimmy Jimmy' and 'White Heat' are Madonna in her purest form, chugging busy and reliable.

Like her last two albums, *True Blue* is nothing more than it claims to be, and it will suffer terribly from an inevitable radio thrashing. But this woman has a definite panache ... I'd like to put her in a ring with Houston, Knopfler and co.

Chad Taylor

### Fat Boys Big and Beautiful WEA

"Prince Markie Dee," "Kool Ski," and "The Human Beatbox, the Ox that Rocks" hit extra hard on this, their third and brightest album.

Opening with an inspired remake of James Brown's 'Sex Machine' that maintains the Godfather's groove but adds the Fat Boy's own sense of rhythm. Intense beat box pyrotechnics keep up the frantic pace, with the human beatbox boom bopping in and out of the mix and the witty rhymes of the young rappers. This is made to chill and thrill.

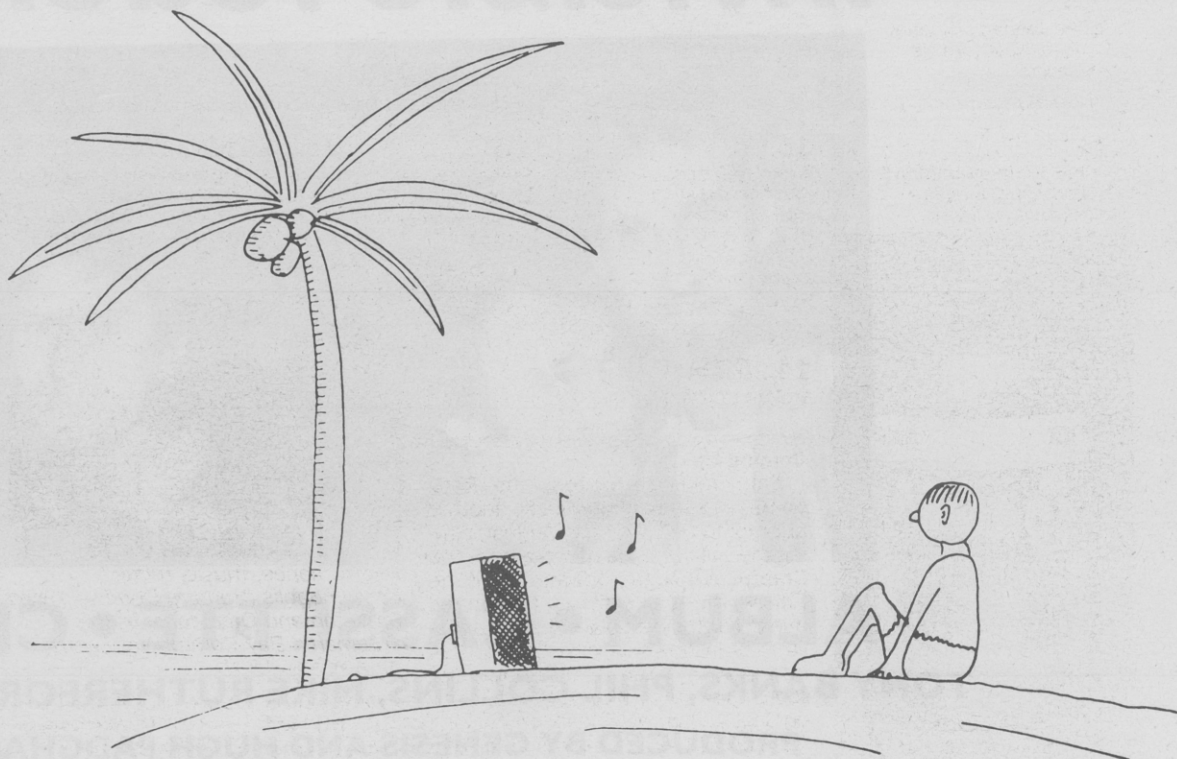
The title track is enough to put Weight Watchers out of business, with a homage to food and heavy sex, as they say, "Baby, look at your man ... why have a snack ... when you can have a meal!"

Tracks like 'In the House' have the new Def Jam style down pat, and 'Beat Box Part III' is almost acapella, but sure is funky. Rap often has a cartoonish quality and 'Double-O Fat Boys' is like 'Batman' written by Ronald Reagan, with our fat heroes fighting the evil Russian imposters and "keeping the beat safe for Uncle Sam ..."

The album features some of the best funk production crowd, with 'Beat Box is Rockin' being particularly hot, much better than their previous Kurtis Blow productions. Rap is essentially made for 12", but the whole album works here, each track is a potential single. Perfect for fat funk fans everywhere.

Kerry Buchanan

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