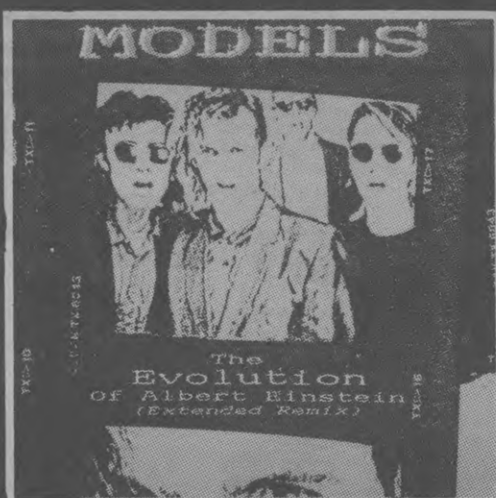


BILLY BRAGG

BILLY BRAGG 'Levi Stubbs' Tears'
4 track 12" including a live version of 'Between the wars' (recorded in East Berlin), plus the simply wonderful title track. First single off New Album. Touring soonish.



THE SAINTS 'See You In Paradise'
On 7" & 12" the new Saints single includes 3 tracks taken from earlier LPs 'Casablanca' and 'Monkey Puzzle'.



MODELS 'Evolution'
The evolution of Albert Einstein. The first single from the forthcoming album. Recorded in London with Mark Opitz and Julian Mendelsohn producing. On 7" & 12"



HOUSEMARTINS 'Happy Hour'
"The band wii' nowt taken out". A sublime slice of pop from the fourth best band in Hull. The U.K. has fallen for The Housemartins — now it's N.Z.'s turn. 7" & 12".

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Records

**Paul Simon
Graceland
Warner Bros**

In general Paul Simon's work is regarded in ridiculously narrow terms by his New Zealand audience. They confine it to the nostalgia of his days in the 60s with Garfunkel. This is despite the fact that most of Simon's best work has been recorded since that duo's demise. His last album, *Hearts and Bones*, was one of 1983's finest, yet hit the sale bins less than a year after its release. At the same time his reunion concert with Garfunkel broke attendance records at Western Springs.

Part of the reason is that Simon resolutely writes about the concerns of his own age group, and the late 30s/early 40s generation isn't big on record buying these days. Especially when a musician they think they should feel comfortable with starts experimenting.

In *Graceland's* detailed sleeve notes Simon writes how the initial inspiration for the album came after hearing a cassette of recent black groups from Soweto. He became hooked and pursued the music to its source, recording with the musicians there and also bringing a drummer, bass-player and guitarist back to New York. The end result is that nine of the 11 tracks here feature artists from Southern Africa. Their input ranges from a rhythm section, to complete band, to composing credits, to use of a choir and the Zulu language on 'Homeless'.

It's no cultural strip-mining Simon's engaged in. He gives full and fulsome acknowledgement to the African contributions. Besides, as much as he's gaining from new stimuli, so are a number of little heard musicians gaining enormous exposure. (It's not the first time Simon's done this sort of thing. In 1971 he was the first major recording artist to travel to Jamaica to play with genuine reggae musicians. Check 'Mother and Child Reunion'.)

But does all this cross-culturalism work? Yes. Emphatically. If some of the elements seem slightly unusual at first, like the accordeon accents on the first track, one soon adjusts. The African in-

Paul Simon



fluences (not to mention Simon's own usual meticulous melodies and finely spun lyrics) become so infectious that after only a couple of hearings it's the two tracks recorded with completely American backing that sound out of place. (And they're certainly not lacking instrumental prowess. There's Los Lobos and a New Orleans bar band with the wonderful name of Good Rockin' Dopsie and the Twisters.)

Financially Paul Simon certainly doesn't need to work (*Bridge Over Troubled Waters*, anyone?) The fact that he continues to produce such first-class records for a seemingly diminishing public is basically their problem. But regardless of its sales potential *Graceland* is one of the year's most refreshing new releases.

Peter Thomson

**Various Artists
Weird Culture, Weird Custom
Jayrem**

Student radio, if you're lucky enough to be near enough to hear it, would have to be the most consistently listenable radio in the country. And this record, two groups from each of the six student stations, reflects the diversity and 80s-FM professionalism of national student radio.

The highlight of the first side would have to be the Remarka-

bles' 'Reno', which outstrips the rest for spirit. The Crawbilly Creeps open the side with 'A Day in Lucky Gulch', out'n'out yeehaw cowboy tiredness, followed by the Jean-Paul Sartre Experience's embryonic funk-stomp 'Let That Good Thing Grow' and Putty in Her Hands' homegrown ode to 'NZ Music'. Two White Eyes' 'Thinking Of' unfortunately suffers through poor singing though, and after the Remarkables, Cassandra's Ears close the side on a mellow note.

That mood is broken by the Battling Strings' exuberant 'If I Do' and 'Christmas in the Country', a strange western pop tale from the Puddle. The Pikelets' 'Real Regression' does sound like a bit of mid-70s' regression, albeit interesting ... while Three Leaning Men's 'Happy' and All Fall Down's 'Holding Time' are basically good pop songs — a genre that the Wetbacks lend a more Waikato R&Bish bent to with 'Don't Get Caught'.

On the whole, this is more commercially-oriented than BFM's *Outnumbered By Sheep*, but apart from the Remarkables, Battling Strings and All Fall Down, *Weird Culture, Weird Custom* is distinctly un-lively. There is some pretty deadpan stuff in there — it's an interesting record, a good vinyl representation, but I do wish they could all throw off those shackles of restraint and really let the good thing grow.

Paul McKessar

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