

# Records

## Dave Dobbyn Footrot Flats Soundtrack Magpie

From this distance, it makes perfect sense that Dave Dobbyn was chosen to write the music for *Footrot Flats*, both being uniquely New Zealand institutions. But he was by no means the safest choice, and it's a tribute to the film's producers that they took the punt. It's also a tribute to Dobbyn that not only has he come up with the two biggest singles of his career, but a complete soundtrack of superb music that stands up on its own — and retains his idiosyncratic personality.

The *Footrot Flats* soundtrack is a fascinating peek into Dobbyn's kaleidoscopic musical mind. Each piece is well structured, but packed with dozens of ideas that seem to have been tossed off nonchalantly. While many soundtracks written by rock musicians come off as second-rate, the sheer creativity of Dobbyn means he has surpassed such slick masters as Ry Cooder and Vangelis. Only the theme for Horse, on 'Footrot Morning' and 'Horse's

Beat,' has a hint of previous film music (the loping piano of *The Pink Panther*), but that impression is quickly swamped by the invention elsewhere.

Apart from composing film music, that is unquestionably his own, the other achievement of this record is his mastering of the sampling equipment to produce original sounds; so often the results from a Fairlight or Emulator are hackneyed. On the rollicking 'Let's Get Canine' Dobbyn asserts his personality on the Emulator, with punchy horns and honky tonk piano. Ardijah provide delightful warm backing vocals to Dobbyn's nonsense falsetto satirising opera and gospel.

The liberation of his vocals is another step forward; this soundtrack vindicates all the promise he's shown since 'Lipstick Power', the first post-Dudes solo single. On 'Satdy Arvo' his voice leaps, wails, cries and squeals to an earthy sequenced slapped bass. And then there's the purity of 'You Oughta Be in Love', Dobbyn's finest vocal performance to date on a song that's become an instant standard and seems to be surviving radio burnout. Aware of its own schmaltziness, moments of subtly creep in, like the cooling backing vocals, the serenading violin and the tentative guitar.

Wit takes a front seat throughout the album, particularly on the pseudo school anthem 'I Dream of Rugby', the grumpy 'Vernon the Vermin' and the simple, warm 'Cooch'. Charm is also constantly prevalent, particularly on 'Slice of Heaven' (and Herbs' own 'Nuclear Waste'). The instrumentals 'Blackwater' and 'Lost at Sea' reflect Dobbyn's quirkiness and melodic flair, and in 'Top Gun' he has another hit single, this time hard-rocking, with a Keith Richards' duel guitar attack and Buddy Holly vocal and lyrical references.

The *Footrots* material DD Smash performed at Christmas provided the highlights of those concerts; they showed the possibilities of the current simple lineup and that audiences can respond to material that goes further than tried-and-true boogie. In 1986 Dave Dobbyn came out of the cold and conquered New Zealand; in 1987 it's time for the rest of the world to find out about him.

Chris Bourke

## Psychedelic Furs Midnight to Midnight CBS

The Furs have always had a history of dour, rough albums (*Talk Talk Talk*) and catchy, poppy singles ('Sister Europe', 'The Ghost Inside', 'Heaven'); you'd always love the singles and sit determinedly through the album. *Midnight to Midnight* is no exception and only the most devoted fans will sit it

out, waiting for that hint of a melancholy riff ('All of the Law') or trace of fun ('One More Word'). They're still fighting for that catchy single with 'Heartbreak Beat' and the movie remake of 'Pretty in Pink' (start off quoting the Velvets and end up serenading Molly Ringwald — that's a pop career for you), but the winning track is not so obvious for this album.

What is obvious is the steady wall of guitars and Richard Butler's singing, both of which give the album a great overall texture — not dissimilar to FGTH's *Liverpool*. Yes, a trend is born; guitar-thrash is back, at least in the pop market. With it the Furs have come full circle, returning to their early days. What a shame they left 'Sister Europe' behind.

Chad Taylor

## The Fall Bend Sinister Virgin

Apparently this might be the last Fall record. That'd be a pity because it sounds a bit like a last gasp and Mark E Smith is not fond of being that obvious. Now, a slightly tired Fall album is still a sight better than a peak performance by virtually any other English band but they're definitely teetering on the brink of redundancy. Apt, I suppose, with Thatcher still firmly in command, but Smith has often professed great admiration for her methods so this is no excuse.

Side one sounds better than

side two. Mostly however because of its long last track 'Gross Chapel' — British Grenadiers, which sounds like the dignified noises made around the time of *Hex Enduction Hour*, thus scoring almost as much for its familiarity as for its intrinsic musical quality. On the other hand side two has the best moment here, a lovely, quiet, subdued vocal passage at the beginning of 'Bournemouth Runner' which demonstrates that Smith can carry a melody and sound good while doing it, something that must terrify him as much as it would most Fall fans, for within a minute it's back to normal speed — rant rhythm assault for the rest of what becomes an average (archetypical even) Fall song.

There's lots of other good bits. There's not enough of them to make this the third great Fall album in a row, there's too little that is either innovative (for the Fall) or full of the monolithic energy that drove the best bits of *Weird and Frightening World* and *This Nation's Saving Grace*. Maybe it's because neither of the band's wonderful drum team (Karl Burns and Paul Hanley) are here but line-up changes have been too common to effect them much. Do another one.

Chris Knox

## Frankie Goes to Hollywood Liverpool ZTT

"From the Diamond Mine to the Factory" — perhaps the ultimate

party argument. Are They As Good Now As They Were Then? Well, yes they are, actually, if not a little better. 'Watching the Wildlife' tumbles out of side two, four minutes of riff and tumble. 'Rage Hard' swaggers out of side one, 'Warriors of the Wasteland' sounds great, and more. Bloody awful sleeve notes, a snappy little anti-PM quip ("She should stop and think / She should buy us all a drink!") and I swear I caught a boy-loves-girl sentiment in there somewhere.

But none of your soppy stuff, mind; this is the "harsh reality" of the modern world (yawn) — unemployment and so on. Instead of sex, a serious rockism time was had by all. Brian Nash's guitar dominates the proceedings, along with Steve Lipson's murky keyboard interruptions and Holly's habit of yelling "Woah!" a lot. Everyone's playing very tough in *Liverpool*; I'm not entirely convinced.

So now Frankie are a real band, I guess, and as such they're up against the same problems as everyone else. Like what to wear and where to go, who to be seen with and what albums (eg. Led Zep) to cite as a major influence, and how to avoid getting very old and dull indeed. Their rock careers will be made a lot simpler by *Liverpool*, it's just the conversations at parties that are going to be a problem. I'll miss the diamond mine's sparkle. What price credibility?

Chad Taylor



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## THE JAYREM RECORDS COUNTDOWN

| THIS MONTH | LAST MONTH |   |              |
|------------|------------|---|--------------|
| 1          | 2          | Attack From Down Unda   | RRLP-103     |
|            |            | Various NZ Heavy Metal IMPORT                                 | RRLC-103     |
| 2          | 1          | He Wiata Mo Te Iwi  | JAY-327      |
|            |            | Aotearoa  | TC-JAY-327   |
| 3          | 4          | 13th Anniversary Live In Japan                                |              |
|            |            | The Residents IMPORT  | AIM-1006     |
| 4          | NEW        | Reggae Blasters Vol. 2  | GETI-11      |
|            |            | Various Artists   | TC-GETI-11   |
| 5          | 7          | Fay Lovsky  | JAY-235      |
|            |            | Fay Lovsky  | TC-JAY-235   |
| 6          | 10         | Walkin' Together  | CIRCULAR-10  |
|            |            | Roger Fox & Mike Booth  | TC-CIRC-10   |
| 7          | 3          | Reggae Blasters Vol. 1  | GETI-10      |
|            |            | Various Artists   | TC-GETI-10   |
| 8          | 6          | Mona With The Children  |              |
|            |            | Doug Cameron  | SNAP-1203    |
| 9          | NEW        | ROBERT THE RECORD   | ROBERT-1/500 |
| 10         | 5          | A Reggae Christmas  | RRS-004      |
|            |            | Various Artists   | TC-RRS-004   |
| 11         | 9          | The Legend (incl. free poster)                                | CC-0016      |
|            |            | Marilyn Monroe  | CC-0016C     |
| 12         | 8          | Roger Fox with Bill Reichenbach & Gary Grant Roger Fox Band   | CIRCULAR-9   |
|            |            |   | TC-CIRC-9    |
| 13         | NEW        | This Is A Mans Mans Mans World/ Jailhouse Rock. The Residents | FAN-004      |
| 14         | 17         | Electrical Storm  |              |
|            |            | Ed Kuepper  | HOT LP-1020  |
| 15         | 11         | Weird Culture, Weird Custom                                   | NSR-001      |
|            |            | National Student Radio Compilation                            | TC-NSR-001   |
| 16         | 19         | Tribute To A Friend   | JAY-320      |
|            |            | Dread Beat & Blood  | TC-JAY-320   |
| 17         | NEW        | Buckle In The Rail  |              |
|            |            | Chad's Tree   | FINE-1       |
| 18         | 20         | Brutal  | RAS-3015     |
|            |            | Black Uhuru   | TC-RAS-3015  |
| 19         | —          | Make Room   | JAY-324      |
|            |            | Luke Hurley   | TC-JAY-324   |
| 20         | NEW        | Sings The Blues   |              |
|            |            | Jimmy Witherspoon IMPORT                                      | AIM-1005     |



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