

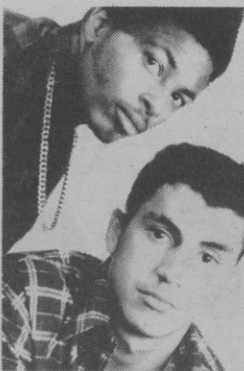
# Records

**Mantronix**  
**Music Madness**  
 10 Records  
**Slayer**  
**Reign of Blood**  
 Def Jam

Slayer's *Reign of Blood*, their third album and first with Def Jam, is a smash hit in the US, and a purists example of speed metal; a less-than-subtle blend of producer Rick (Run DMC, Beasties) Rubin's minimalist production and Slayer's enraged, mouth foaming, blood spurting death throwdown.

With every track running at about two minutes and bearing a remarkable resemblance to the last track, *Reign of Blood* is more likely to appeal to your would-be Charles Manson, bloodloving cromagnon men or nearly dead, still-twitching sort of people, rather than someone who thinks LL Cool J is cute.

Rock and roll still rules, but Mantronix is getting all the column



Mantronix

inches in the now desperate British rock press, who have been flogging hip-hop to death for the past year. Mantronix's second album is very popular in the UK, and but for MC Tee's contribution, it is an excellent progression on the debut album of last year.

Mantronik, the DJ of the duo, has proved himself a more-than-capable producer for NY label Sleeping Bag Records, and his excursions with Joyce Sims and

Nocera, both available on import here, have been great. The move from the rock beats of Def Jam to something closer to a Latin/Jamaican fusion adds some new life to the form, making Mantronix the beatbox equivalent of a jazz drummer, and a trial and error producer whose work is meticulous in the extreme.

Utilising swing band cut-ups on 'Big Band B-Boy', which owes more to Spike Jones than to Duke Ellington, Mantronik approaches his finest 10 minutes, and 'Listen to the Bass of Get Stupid Fresh Part II' in which he plagiarises himself, is a quirky, weird little thing which out-arts Art of Noise. MC Tee, a rapper who doesn't deserve a record contract, shouldn't even rate a mention, but for some rather naive singing on 'Scream', where he eventually acquits himself for his laconic, uninspiring performances to date.

'Music Madness' is a good and recent view of New York hip-hop, and one that keeps the medium fresh in spite of the fact the music is approaching its 10 years with all speed. Really, it's about time we saw some of this stuff live out

here. Get this record in the meantime.

**Peter Grace**

**Aretha Franklin**  
**Amazing Grace**  
 Atlantic

It's 1972 and Aretha returns to the church to regain strength and find solace in the rock of ages. As she confided to Mahalia Jackson, "To tell Jesus I cannot bear these burdens alone."

To many, the splendid and sacred are like two rivers that should never cross, the lure of mammon and flesh has taken a few down the wrong river into the pop world. The most famous was Sam Cooke, who left the Soul Stirrers to stir something else, and never retained his church audience — "Get that blues singer down," they shouted at him.

But Aretha, Lady Soul, was renamed Sister 'Ree at the New Temple Missionary Baptist Church on South Broadway. They welcomed her with open arms and responded with joyful 'Amen's at her melismatic gospel power. As the Reverend C L Franklin remarks, "If you want to know the

truth, she has never left the church ..." Opening with Inez Andrews' evangelical 'Mary, Don't You Weep' which sweeps along with a power that is anything but earthly. The combination of Carole King's 'You've Got a Friend' and 'Precious Lord' is a thing of beauty. The writer of 'Precious Lord', Thomas A Dorsey, is the father of modern gospel; he also wrote the less-than-godly 'It's Tight Like That'.

It's appropriate that one of the best tracks, the most uptempo and uplifting, belongs to Clara Ward's 'How I Got Over'. For it was Clara who really inspired Aretha to become a singer. The congregation surge and Aretha soars in a huge voice, all with the tight rhythms of Chuck Rainey on bass and Bernard Purdie on drums. Each track is a wonder, with 'Amazing Grace' a shattering emotional experience, over 10 minutes of spiritual force.

Viv Broughton in his book *Black Gospel* wrote of the church deserters, "There were always 20 exquisite voices who stayed behind for everyone that left ...." But the evidence of this record is that

Aretha's heart and soul remains deep in the spirit of gospel. If you think she sounds good doing schlock like 'Jumping Jack Flash' pick this one up for real enlightenment.

**Kerry Buchanan**

**Gregory Abbott**  
**Shake You Down (CBS)**

Now this guy is no fool, he's got all the right moves. The moody cover shot with this "let's just slip into something a bit more comfortable" look in the eyes, and the yuppie look on the back, like a tennis pro on his day off. The guy's real cool you know. One of those nice tenor to falsetto voices, that on the good tracks like 'Shake You Down' reminds me of the Stylistics' Russell Thompkins Jr. But as the song goes, "there's something missing," this boy got a hole in his sole. Some tracks hit the target like the 70s' soul styled 'I Got the Feeling (It's Over)' but most just lack the natural sensuality of good soul music. It sounds like he's faking it.

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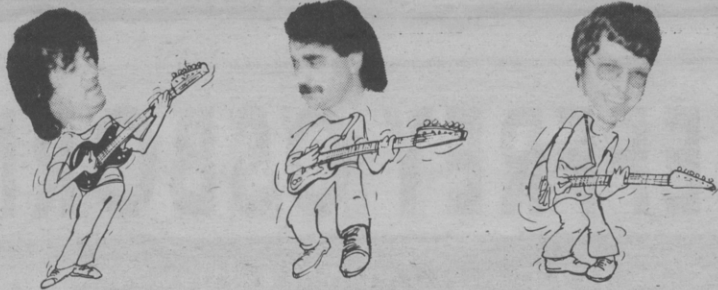
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