

# Records

**David Byrne and Various Artists**  
**Sounds from True Stories: the Original Soundtrack**  
EMI

The soundtrack-to-the-movie-of-the-newspaper-clippings. With the exception of 'City of Steel' which is Talking Heads' instrumental version of 'City of Dreams' from *True Stories*, and the moving finale of 'Glass Operator' which is an adap-

tation of 'Dream Operator', this soundtrack album bears little relation to the band's *True Stories*. Instead, this music is a continuation of that other side of Byrne's artistic life illustrated in the past with his collaboration with Eno in *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, his ballet score for *The Catherine Wheel* and his music for *The Knee Plays*.

As a soundtrack *True Stories* definitely succeeds in providing musical colour and context to its characters, a fact borne out by the perfectly anonymous 'Mall Muzak', the cruising backdrop of 'Freeway Son' and the stiff fanfare of 'Disco Hits'. The best tunes survive quite

readily on their own. 'City of Steel' is an aural Texas sunset, 'Love Theme' a piece of Celtic romance, 'Road Song' a classical playfulness and 'Dinner Music' everybody's refined etiquette.

It seems there's hardly a musical style or human type Byrne hasn't dealt with. If the movie's as good as the music then expect a treat.

**George Kay**

**Timbuk 3**  
**Greetings from Timbuk 3**  
IRS

Pat MacDonald and Barbara K are no ordinary married couple. For one thing, they look slightly

weeird, sortallike macrobiotic speed freaks in sneakers. For another, they put out a kinky kinda music, based on acoustic guitars, taped backing and melodies. But weirdest of all, their novelty number 'The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades' has gotten airplay on *commercial radio*.

But don't let that put you off. *Greetings from Timbuk 3* is an eccentric album full of nutty rhythms, melodies and lyrics. It sounds as though they've outgrown their undoubted busker origins; Pat MacDonald's a superb guitar player, and he weaves subtle electric lines through the strong acoustic rhythms, before

coming on with a harmonica like an organ grinder. Barbara K contributes electric guitar, violin, mandolin and harmonies, and the third member of the group is their jambox, a ghetto-blasters on which they've record a rhythm section.

The result is the most refreshing bunch of sounds and songs I've heard in ages, slightly off-beam and devoid of rock clichés. With their quirky, aware lyrics they're like folk-rock meets rap. 'Just Another Movie' is Reagan in a spaghetti western, 'Hairstyles and Attitudes' satirises the image-bound, 'Shame on You' the sellers-out to the rat race. 'Friction' is a particular standout, it rocks along with a catchy melody, with a typical Timbuk structure — weird.

It's rare for mainstream radio here to pick up on something so unusual: in the US they're probably college radio fare, but here, with the dark, sordid images of David & David also getting airplay, it means there's hope yet: let the airwaves flow!  
**Chris Bourke**

**The Kinks**  
**Come Dancing with the Kinks: The Best of 1977-86**  
Arista

More than any other band, the Kinks have been the victims of barefaced record company exploitations. From *Golden Hours* (Parts One and Two) to *Sunny Afternoons*, their days with Pye, in particular, have been constantly repackaged with an eye for the buck that would make even Hendrix's grave robbers grimace with envy. Inevitably, this double album (wisely sub-titled "The Best of," as a "Greatest Hits" claim would've been an exaggeration of the band's chart status in the last 10 years) picks the eyes out of their seven albums on Arista. Ironically, as the Kinks have declined as a singles' band, their ability at shifting albums has reached gold largely because of the conquest of America in the 70s.

So what do you get? Well 'Juke Box Music' and 'Rock & Roll Fantasy' from *Sleepwalker* and *Misfits* respectively, remain as pertinent little anecdotes of people living the rock and roll myth. 'Come Dancing,' their highest charter in the 10 years, with its fairground reggae wash and typical Davies nose for nostalgia and past values, is still priceless as is the irresistible optimism of 'Better Things' from *Give the People What they Want*, a single recalling the classic Kinks of the 60s, but neglected in the 80s.

Extra treats include an effortless C&W flavoured 'Long Distance' from the tape of *State of Confusion* and the single 'Father Christmas.' Disappointments exist particularly in the realisation that *Low Budget*, here represented by the title track, 'Catch Me Now' and 'Superman,' tried too hard to score on the American market, a weakness reinforced by the *One for the Road* live version of 'You Really Got Me' where stadium/FM flash kills the relative understatement of the

original.

In Jon Savage's official biography *The Kinks*, Ray Davies is quoted as saying, "I'm not bitter, but I'm confused. The audience is there, what's wrong is the middle ground. The only things the radio stations play are the old stuff." The point is this: unlike the self-pitying Pete Townshend and that hoary old teenage Mick Jagger, the Kinks' Ray Davies is still writing good honest rock and roll. Sure, his best may be behind him, but *Come Dancing* provides glimpses of his continuing unpretentious genius for writing songs about ordinary people.

**George Kay**

**George Jones**  
**Wine Coloured Roses**  
Epic

**Ray Charles**  
**From the Pages of My Mind**  
CBS

"I sent her some wine coloured roses ... they'll tell her I'm still on the wine." George is on familiar territory here, singing about lost love and retribution, though less about the sauce. But despite the routine material, he still manages to inject some life into it — maybe that's professionalism. While no melodies linger as anything special, the Rolls Royce of voices is in fine form, and the lyrics keep stretching those metaphors and puns: "I put a golden band on the right left hand this time" — that's before. "Send my backside to my ex-wife. Tell her to seal it with a kiss" — that's after.

*Wine Coloured Roses* is an improvement on *Who's Gonna Fill Their Shoes?* out earlier this year. The Jones trademarks are present — the voice that chokes back the tears, the piano that's been drinking, the wonderful Billy Sherrill-arranged male backing chorus — and the most encouraging thing is, George overcomes the second-rate material.

Where are the songwriters, one might ask — they're out there, in the form of Earle, Travis and Yoakam, but perhaps someone should let the masters know. Ray Charles is another case in point. Twenty-five years on from his pivotal *Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music*, Charles's wonderful voice remains the warmest in music, but sadly his knack of selecting lack-lustre or inappropriate material has finally overwhelmed him. There's barely a standout here; it's as action-packed as one of those cures for insomnia Eric Clapton put out in the late 70s.

Like George's *Roses*, Ray's *Pages* is discreetly produced by Billy Sherrill at Nashville's 1111 Studios with some of the town's best sessioners. But whereas George rises above his material's shortcomings, only 'Love is Worth the Pain' is sung with any conviction by Ray. Perhaps he knows the songs aren't worth stretching out on — there's no life, or humour, only that voice.

**Chris Bourke**

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