

Records

Haemoglobins Psychodelicatessan South Indies

Christchurch's Haemoglobins show a healthy regard for the best bits of rock and roll and an even healthier disregard for most things serious on *Psychodelicatessan's* nine tracks. Songs here include vaguely familiar borrowings of everything from 50s rockabilly onwards, including the genre of television (a revamped 'Sing Out for Greggs' theme). At their best the Haemo's really do rock out in style; at their worst (represented in some of *Psychodelicatessan's* tracks), the band stutter off their already uneven keel (token yachting imagery for America's Cup stalwarts ...).

What's best is the likes of the funky rave-up 'Kiss Me Hardy'. Laurens Van Der Lingen's dramatic, often unintelligible vocals skitting across the instrumentation and bouncing off co-vocalist Liz Thompson's words. The effect is slightly more bizarre than the

Ulrich's harmonys, but hell, it still works!

Discovered on the "corner of Fifth and Main," the Haemoglobins are an entertaining diversion in what is becoming something of a very neat South Indies tradition — "ever so slightly warped people," I'd call it.

Paul MacKessar

**John Lennon
Menlove Avenue
Parlophone**

After suggesting Yoko Ono was a "stylish grave-robber" early last year for releasing the pointless *John Lennon: Live in New York City*, a letter arrived suggesting I had a "poisoned mind." With this latest journey into Lennon's unreleased material however, Ono has redeemed herself.

Menlove Avenue (the title refers to Lennon's boyhood home) re-opens the file on "The Lost Weekend" — the drunken year he spent separated from Ono in 1973-74, during which he produced some of his most passionate, but also assured and accessible, solo work. This record reflects two very distinct sides to Lennon from that period — the eternal bopping greaser of *Rock*

and *Roll* and the tortured minimalism of *Plastic Ono Band* (1970) watered down for *Walls and Bridges* (1974).

Lennon was always happiest when he was imitating Chuck Berry. Side one contains outtakes from *Rock and Roll*, and while 'Here We Go Again', 'Rock 'n' Roll People' and 'Since My Baby Left Me' are straight-forward, loose boogie, co-producers Spector and Lennon indulging themselves, 'Angel Baby' and 'To Know Her is to Love Her' are re-explored to perfection. The vocal performances are so emotional and delicate, you could blow them away. Despite having one of the great rock voices, Lennon was never confident as a singer, hence the sound of double-tracked singing became his trademark (as Julian's producers know).

Not only was Lennon a master of the Spector Wall of Sound (as his production work on *Rock and Roll* and *Double Fantasy* attest), he also pioneered rock minimalism with *Plastic Ono Band*. That sparse sound is recalled on side two with five outtakes from *Walls and Bridges*. While not as gut-wrenching as *POB*, he's baring his soul with the same simple, pure

beauty. 'Scared', 'Nobody Knows You (When You're Down and Out)', (with the ironic line "everybody loves you when you're six foot in the ground") and 'Bless You' drift in and out like a slow, gentle suite. 'Old Dirt Road' is particularly moving; it was written with drinking buddy Harry Nilsson, for whom Lennon produced (and dominated) the revealing *Pussy Cats*.

So, no surprises, but three-quarters of an excellent album highly recommended to anyone who was moved by the 70s John Lennon. One quibble, however — why wasn't his epic version of 'Be My Baby' (from the *Rock and Roll* sessions) included along with 'Angel Baby'? *Menlove Avenue* would then be essential.

Chris Bourke

**Spandau Ballet
Through the Barricades
CBS**

I should have known something was wrong when the cover of this album showed Spandau Ballet's songwriter and lead guitarist, Gary Kemp, had grown sideburns. The Spandaus started off playing synth-by-numbers dance music for hairdressers in 1980. They got funky for their second album

Diamond and turned into pop idols on *True*. The next album saw little change in style but now the Spandaus unleash their latest attempt at international fame — stadium rock!

All the hallmarks are here for huge success in America. The anthem-like lyrics feature lots of bondage-war-combat imagery and the songs have titles like 'Man in Chains', 'Fight for Ourselves' and 'Through the Barricades'. The drum beat is just right for punching your fist in the air and even guitar solos are included to keep the heavy metal fans happy.

No matter what style the band uses Gary Kemp can still write a good pop song. However the sideburns appear to have affected this ability, with only two tracks rising above the background noise. 'Fight for Ourselves' qualifies as singalong material and the arrangement of 'Through the Barricades' is so over the top (acoustic guitars leading into crashing drums and guitars) it is likeable.

W Bishop

**Stephen Cummings
This Wonderful Life (Centre)**

Cummings was the singer in the Sports, an Australian band who

turned out more than their share of decent songs when they weren't copying second-hand Costello Americanisms. As a soloist Cummings has opted for a doe-eyed intellectual sophistication, meaning he doesn't want to alienate either old Sports fans or a potential middle-aged market. On his new album he pitches too far to the cryptic craftsmanship of a Paddy McAloon when his best songs like 'Speak With Frankness' and 'This is the Way' have a fluency he showed with the Sports. Inessential but interesting. GK

**Daryl Hall
Three Hearts in the Happy
Ending Machine (RCA)**

With a galaxy of stars ranging from the unavoidable Dave Stewart as co-producer to the likes of Bob Geldof and Joni Mitchell, this album seals Hall's fate as the rich kid whose money is trying to create talent. His single 'Dreamtime' typifies the album — a mundane melody hauled through the FM processor to guarantee "professional quality" to the exclusion of "amateur" creativity. A bad album title, a worse album. GK

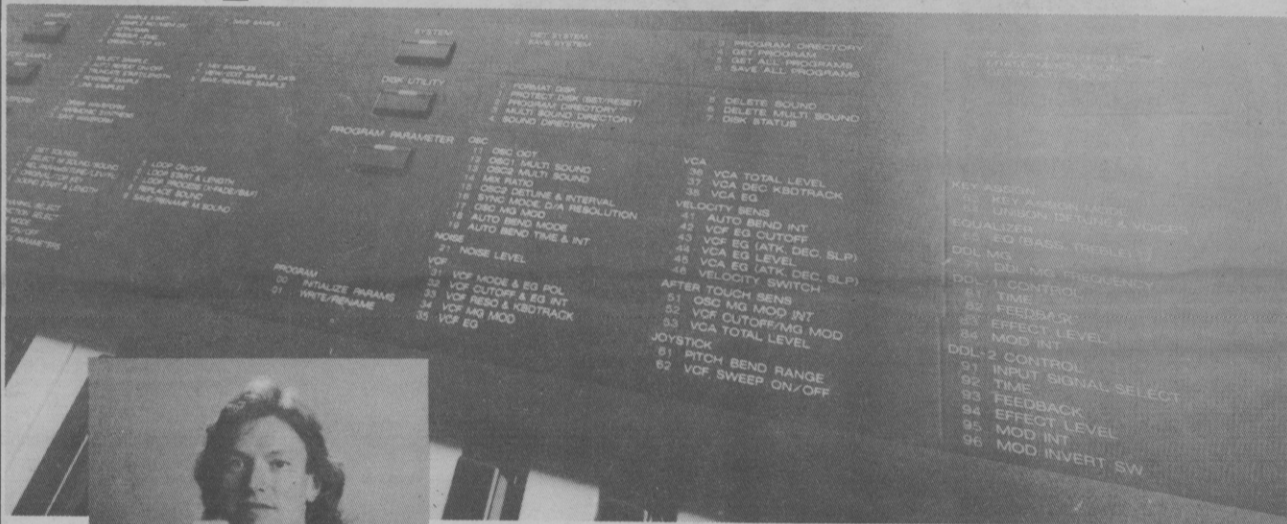


PLAYING

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Steve Winwood
Multi-Instrumentalist, Vocalist, Composer

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