

Records

Hoodoo Gurus Blow Your Cool WEA

The first album was great but essentially a collection of early singles; the second had its moments in 'Bitter Sweet' and 'Death Defying,' but no killer diller. But this one's a whole new ball game — a solid party machine all revved up and ready to roar.

The Gurus sound like they are having a lot of fun, and working with the Bangles on 'Good Times' must have been — it oozes a *joie de vivre* that's hard to escape. There is a real celebratory feel to the album, with a full production sound from Mark Opitz, with plenty of soaring guitars and a punchy

snare beat. 'Out that Door' finds Dave Faulkner in fine voice, in fact I never realized what a distinctive singer he is. Vocal wise the big beat ballad of 'I Was the One' is the real gem, with that typical Australian romanticism in full bloom, big tear inducing lines like "Darling, this is goodbye, kiss me, I don't know why." But if you like the rocking Gurus, 'Hell for Leather' burns rubber — "You're My Motorcycle, I'm Your Gasoline."

This album defines the real Hoodoo sound, still full of musical references and influences, but a different and strong individual sound. Blow your cool with the Hoodoos.

Kerry Buchanan

Dr John Gumbo Avalanche/Ode

Radiate those 88s and do the mess around! The finest primer to

New Orleans R&B has been released! In 1972 Dr John, with the psychedelic Creole nightmare of the Night Tripper wearing thin, sat down with New Orleans' finest players and re-did the classic R&B tunes that kept Bourbon St bopping in the 50s. What resulted wasn't an exercise in nostalgia but a jitterbugging introduction to the foundation of funk.

Gumbo remains one of Dr John's best, certainly it's the earliest that is still listenable, the Night Tripper stuff having dated badly. It features many of the songs that are pivotal to R&B history, purely arranged and performed using some of the original players, and his piano playing is to the fore.

His version of Professor Longhair's 'Tipitina' typifies the genre — more rhythms spill out than you knew existed, without ever losing its sway. Rolling, lur-

ching, hiccuping. Ray Charles' 'Mess Around' is taken at breakneck speed, with a shouting Dr John hustled along by drummer Harold Battiste. 'Those Lonely Lonely Nights' pays tribute to New Orleans popularist Fats Domino, and there's a five-song medley to the legendary Huey "Piano" Smith. Among the classics are 'Iko Iko,' 'Big Chief,' and a staggering version of the perennial 'Stack O'Lee'. The playing is raw and gritty, and Dr John's singing ... well, that's an acquired taste.

If this album turns you on, there's the whole world of Louisiana waiting out there — plus Dr John's other great moments, *In the Right Place*, *Desitively Bonaroo* and his two recent solo albums, all easy to pick up. Catch rockin' pneumonia and the boogie woogie flu!

Chris Bourke



Chris Isaak

Chris Isaak WEA

If you can think of music in terms of cinema, this is a film noir album. Dark, intense and dripping with menace.

Isaak has a nice touch in re-activating the melancholia of the classic male voice, the operatic emotions of Orbison and the edgy sexuality of Elvis. What I like about this and his earlier album is the merging of the old classic styles with a new sensibility, the persona may be idealised 50s (with a James Dean look on the cover), but the songs belong to the 80s.

The opening track 'You Owe Me Some Kind of Love' has a great feel, with Isaak simmering over the cool guitar work of James Calvin Wilsey and the steady rhythm section. Isaak places the emphasis on "you owe me," giving it an uneasy cynicism, which appears in a lot of his songs. Just like Orbison can sound real psychotic, Isaak can get real gone with that strange falsetto on tracks like 'Blue Hotel'.

A great sounding album that has an ambience that most rock albums lack, with a band that plays with a sparse feel that allows the music to develop a feeling of tautness and tension. Sometimes an artist's second album can show their limitations, but in Isaak's case, he's going from strength to strength.

Kerry Buchanan

The Mockers Emperor's New Clothes RCA

After eight years and five albums (one live, one compilation) how do we find the Mockers? Not so much teen heroes anymore as pop statesmen ... with Andrew the uncrowned fop about town. And beneath the *Emperor's New Clothes*, what is revealed? A maturing band that concentrates less on 60s-derived simple pop singles, and looks for a harder sound for the late 80s.

That's not to say the Mockers have abandoned their staple, the catchy melody; Gary Curtis's pop ear hasn't lost its touch. In familiar Mockery vein is 'Sleeping Through My Storm,' a standout that flows along dreamily, with a real hook and delicate vocal, plus Beatlesque guitar. 'Boring Brigade' is

the other characteristic Mockery melody, aided by Tim Wedde's strumming piano; one guesses Curtis heard more than a few Elton John hits on the radio in his formative years.

But to their credit the Mockers have extended their vocabulary with this album. Producer Peter Dawkins and engineer Tim Field have crafted some mini-epics, and blow me down, they come off — 'Shield Yourself,' a sensitive number with Wedde arpeggios, and the more mannered 'Take Back Your Tears,' driven by acoustic guitar with sequenced effects and U2 solo. A heavier Mockers is revealed on 'What We've Missed' and 'So Cold in Here,' both made for FM; the excellent (funky, even) 'Love Don't Break Promises,' with backing vocals by Debbie Harwood shining through the murk; and 'Age of Make Believe,' another Tim Wedde vehicle, with a squeaking Walter Bianco sax solo.

The lyrics are typically elliptical, but with a refreshing self-deprecating tone: "This is the final fling" ... "I'm burning my bridges before they're built" ... and indeed, the *Emperor's New Clothes*. Beneath the foppiness is a record with hardly a duff track, nothing startlingly innovative, but perhaps the first Mockers album rather than collection of singles.

Chris Bourke

The Charlie Watts Orchestra Live at Fulham Town Hall CBS

The rich, as Scott Fitzgerald used to say, are different from you and me. For instance they can afford to indulge their fantasies. Take Charlie Watts. He's long fancied the idea of playing in one of those big, swinging bands that were so triumphantly popular in the 30s and early 40s. So, with the Stones in seemingly permanent hiatus, he got together a bunch of Britain's finest musos and arranged some gigs (including a recent American tour).

This is no small expense when you consider that the band has a huge 31 members. And if their ensemble playing is a tad loose at times they compensate with some first-rate soloing. The material predominantly consists of swing standards (Benny Goodman et al) but also includes a Charlie Parker number arranged for two basses.

It probably goes without saying that such an album would probably not have got local release without the commercial pulling power of its leader's name. Nonetheless *Live at Fulham* is no mere novelty but contains some substantial enjoyment. (Check out the fiery sax workouts on 'Flying Home') It's certainly more fun than the last couple of albums Charlie's played on.

(PS: Don't expect to be able to assess how he fares as a jazzier. The band has three drummers and you can't distinguish between them.)

Peter Thomson



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