

RECORDS

Tom Waits Frank's Wild Years Island

The piano hasn't been drinking, but I bet you a 10-spot that Tom has been hitting the sauce. Some albums speak to you with whiskey on their breath, but this baby is like emptying the jacuzzi, filling it with Old Pale Gold and just wallowing.

Tom's early works are like Bukowski with a beat, bo-ho to the max, a bit of bedroom romanticism and barroom sentimentalism. Music for intellectual drunks. Now *Frank's Wild Years* is a different glass of J&B over rocks indeed — the grand finale to the trilogy started by *Swordfishtrombone*, continued by *Raindogs*, and hit on the head by this little beauty.

A gem floating in the sea of vinyl shit, a bit off the planet, but as they said in *Blue Velvet*, "It's a strange world." Now the actual song is from *Swordfishtrombone* about Frank the furniture salesman living with his wife and her chihuahua called Carlos. Well Frank gets pissed on Mickey's Big Mouths (the world's strongest brewski) and torches the whole schebang. Here we find Frank a free man, ready, well, to set the world on fire.



Tom Waits (pic: Robert Frank)

On a roll with the first track, 'Hang on St Christopher,' setting off with religious zeal and going 'Straight to the Top' in strict rumba time. But things don't go too smooth, there are regrets in the sublime 'Innocent When You Dream,' but when the booze wears off, Frank's back and off to New York. In a scorching Vegas version of 'Straight to the Top,' Frank sounds like an Italian songbird. Move over Dean Martin and tell Sinatra the news.

Each track has its own interesting musical texture, and if any of you are into structuralism, there are some wild sub-texts that only Tom and a few drunks could understand. Like the previous two albums, this one has

pump organs and things like the Optigon making noises, and don't you just love that Farfisa beat on 'Telephone Call from Istanbul.'

Like a fresh tattoo before it scabs, an album of tingling beauty, just like a Jackson Pollock painting, this just drips with drunken wisdom.

Hey Tom, you're my sort of guy.
Kerry (Hold the Ice) Buchanan

Sting A&M

This is a very mellow album, a more complex version of the jazz-coloured *Dream Of The Blue Turtles*. The wide range of musical influences give Sting's lyrics (heavy on the bibliography, ridiculously simple on the rhyme) and his moods room to move. When he's at his best (mature, sensitive, literary) Sting is the best; 'Lazarus Heart', 'They Dance Alone' and 'We'll Be Together' are as good as 'Tea in The Sahara' or his live version of 'Burn For You', I swear. But when Sting's at his worst (pompous, opinionated, bombastic) he dies a thousand deaths. 'We'll Be Together' was a sexy and carefree single but one hearing of the B-side, the insane 'Ode To A Dog', and you could feel your affection for his work drawing back like fat on water.

Nothing Like The Sun doesn't have too many songs like 'Ode To A Dog'. The experiments and lofty concepts work because Sting writes good

hooks and his band (the *Blue Turtles* nucleus of Kirkland, Marsalis and co.) can play beautifully. They really do have a good sound; the best side of expensive-sounding jazz, busy and absorbing.

Funnily enough, it takes another man's song (Hendrix's 'Little Wing'), arranged and played by someone else and his band (Gil Evans and his orchestra) and another man's lead guitar (Hiram Bullock) to remind Sting and the listener that the man can sing. He's a natural performer but is too fickle and too intelligent to leave the backroom-work to someone else; *Nothing Like The Sun* is very much a solo album, however many people are helping out. It's a double-disc album, 12 songs that range from the sublime to the ridiculous. And 'Lazarus Heart', 'We'll Be Together' and 'Little Wing', jeez, they take my breath away every time.

Chad Taylor

Hunters & Collectors What's a Few Men? White Label

This, the sixth Hunters & Collectors album, makes one helluva big noise, but unfortunately it's not always the sweet blast of their wall-of-sheer-joy horn section; it's a big drum sound and strident guitar backing Mark Seymour's war cry — R&B here we come!

Human Frailty was going that way,

and *What's a Few Men?* completes the job. Right from the opening bars of 'Faraway Man,' you're aware that both the songs and production (courtesy of American Greg Edwards) are going raw R&B in a big way.

It's a good record though, showcased on their recent ('tight as a duck's arse') live shows. The best songs — shuddering anti-nuclear Pacific pride in 'Breakneck Road,' the angry whine of 'hey sir, you got a dollar for a drink?' in 'You Can Have it All' and the ballad 'What's a Few Men?' — cut through and stand out a mile. There's added stuff (strings and harmonica) but the essence of the record is almost the resounding hollow 'boom!' of John Archer's drums. Not the groundbreaker that *Human Frailty* was, and containing nothing of the calibre of 'Throw Your Arms Around Men,' nevertheless, a decent consolidation.

I just hope that they can hold together and keep workin' on up. This boy'll keep comin' back for more.
Paul McKessar

UB40 The Best of DEP

UB40 appeared at a time when British reggae, via the antics of Madness, the Specials and the Beat, was seizing centre stage. It's common enough knowledge that they took their name from the unemployment benefit form,

and that in itself was a tell-tale sign of their honourable if earthbound musical intentions.

Their trademarks of Ali Campbell's slow 'n' easy smokey vocals, garnished by Brian Travers' sleepy tenor sax made their first two singles, 'King/ Food for Thought' and 'My Way of Thinking,' ideal summer cruisin'-in-the-shade fare — a contrast to the combustion of the free 12" singles that were handed out with their first two albums. From their second LP, *Present Arms*, this *Best of* features '1 in 10,' and although few could argue with its humanitarian plea, the band was beginning to sound sterile.

Suspensions of early arthritis were confirmed with their cover of Neil Diamond's 'Red Red Wine,' a chart-topper after four of their own singles had died in 1982-3. That cover was a shrewd career move, as it paved the way for others, including their sober attempt at Jimmy Cliff's 'Many Rivers to Cross,' and culminating in their duet with Chrissie Hynde on 'I Got You, Babe.'

UB40 could hardly be accused of pretension, in fact their low-key passionless approach has always needed a shot of adrenalin or adventure. And this *Best of* (Vol 1) is evidence of a band who've found it hard going to sustain the little momentum that they initially mustered.

George Kay



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The Robin Kora Award for excellence in television presentation: DICK DRIVER

Most Promising Yuppie Award: ROGER SHEPHERD for moving to Auckland

The Playing Great Music In A Sea of Shit Award: ALL STUDENT RADIO STATIONS

The He's In A Meeting Award for staunch support of New Zealand music: C.J. STONE, Magic 91FM

The We've Got A New Record Out Soon... Maybe Next Year...? the Year After? Award for best band: FLESH D-VICE

New Zealand Music Industry Kick In The Balls Award: EMI, for closing the record pressing plant... and the cassette plant

Most Outrageous Record For Radio Programmers To Consider Playlisting Award: "Singing For Our People" by AOTEAROA, for having the audacity to sing songs in NZ's native language

Most Outdated Haircut Award: TREVOR REEKIE

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