

# RECORDS

## THE SPECIALS



### The Specials Two Tone/Chrysalis

Look, all the signs were there on the "Gangsters" fortyfive:

Why must you record my phone calls?  
Are you planning a bootleg LP?  
Said you'd been threatened by gangsters  
Now it's you that's threatening me.

A typically straight-from-the shoulder Jerry Dammers story fused with a ska beat and echo chamber to produce a creeping sense of fear and paranoia. The single had everything yet it took that little bit longer to appreciate. But people sat up and realised that the Specials weren't just another five-black two-white seven piece ska band from Coventry with their own record label (2 Tone).

To follow such an auspicious beginning Costello was used to produce this, their first album, and he shows that like his producer, Nick Lowe, he prefers to leave the sound ungarnished. He allows the natural rubbery exuberance of the Specials to come to the fore and, for drummer Brad, this really pays off as his drum sound certainly packs a clout.

The band are relaxed and almost cocksure as they know damn well they are the best white exponents of what they are doing. Whether it's on the cruising reggae of "Stupid Marriage" and "Doesn't Make It Alright", bouncing ska rhythms, "Monkey Man" and "Dawning of a New Era" or even (just) rock'n'roll as in Roddy Radiation's "Concrete Jungle", they have that authentic rightfeel that is the core of the best rock music.

Dammers is a keyboards player of the Bob Andrews' school which is saying something and as songwriter he doesn't miss much. He's direct and colloquial, you'll get no fancy metaphors or veiled references from this baby:

Just because you're nobody it doesn't mean  
that you're no good.  
Just because there's a reason it doesn't  
mean it's understood.

("Doesn't Make It Alright")  
You're done too much, much too young  
Now you're married with a kid when you  
could be having fun with me.

Ain't he cute, no he ain't,  
He's just another burden on the welfare  
state.

("Too Much Too Young")

Despite a couple of weak songs Dammers has enough suss and raw ability to be fingered as one of the finds of last year, and that goes for the band an' all.

This album grows and becomes a habit, a good habit. C'mon and do da bluebeat.

**George Kay**

### The Shoes Present Tense Elektra

*Black Vinyl Shoes* was the first Shoes album, on PVC, a label which has also released such vital esoterica as the third from Big Star. Shoes made *Black Vinyl* in their lounge as a demo tape for friends and, maybe, the odd record company, so it sounded sorta hissy and weird when PVC made it into a real record in late 1977. A brilliant pop-rock collection it was too. Next came a one-off single "Tomorrow Night" on Bomp which fulfilled all the promise of the

demo tape debut, and now a proper album — recorded, interestingly enough, in England. (One look at the cover photo should tell you Shoes are undeniably American) (In fact, they're from Zion, Illinois).

Shoes are four, and three of them write. Very well. Guitarist Gary Klebe seems marginally the strongest, and the tougher bits on the album, so necessary to balance the breathy vocals and light-pretty-cute top to the music, are invariably his. The killer is that old Bomp single, done anew for Elektra, and a perfect Anglo-American marriage of early shifting rhythm Kinks (the verse) and The Raspberries (the chorus). In support are a fat handful of gems — "In My Arms Again", "Listen", "Too Late", "Now And Then" ...riffs sometimes, melodies always.

*Present Tense* is an excellent album. No-one is currently doing it better in the well-trodden post-Beatles post-Byrds field, and even if Shoes do inhabit a hitherto only moderately rewarding position in that genre — between the perky commercialism of The Knack and the steamroller dynamics of Cheap Trick — they will, like Dwight Twilley, hopefully keep making their music from there. After all, if Shoes really want to be megastars, would they let their leader call himself Gary Klebe?

**Roy Colbert**

### Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers Damn the Torpedoes Backstreet

Tom Petty has had a hard time of late, with the breakup of Shelter Records and a lengthy hassle with MCA which led to him declaring bankruptcy and finally signing a deal giving him his own MCA distributed label, Backstreet Records.

But all that is behind him now, and as this

album kicks you in the head with its opener, "Refugee", you know that Tom Petty still has all his marbles.

Not that *Damn The Torpedoes* contains any surprises. It's simply another excellent Tom Petty album, which automatically puts it above just about anything else coming out of America these days.

His ear for a good hookline has no equals, as he proves beyond any doubt in "Even The Losers". "Shadow Of A Doubt" recalls "Magnolia" on *You're Gonna Get It*, but has that extra clout to it with the twin guitars of TP and Mike Campbell. A great combination.

Campbell plays even better on the frantic "Century City", and "Don't Do Me Like That" (which has been Petty's biggest Stateside hit to date) actually pales alongside many of the other tracks here. "You Tell Me" is a lovely slow burner, and "Louisiana Rain" sees the city boy going country, featuring Campbell's soaring slide guitar.

Co-producer is Jimmy Iovine, best known for stealing one of Springsteen's best songs for Patti Smith. Iovine knows his way around a studio, and the sparkle he puts into Petty's production is an asset.

Three albums, each one a treasure. Add this to your collection and support Tom Petty. Right now, he needs the money.

**Duncan Campbell**



STEVE FORBERT



CARLENE CARTER

### Steve Forbert Jackrabbit Slim Epic Carlene Carter Two Sides to Every Woman Warner Bros

Steve Forbert and Carlene Carter arrived on the scene with a splash: their debut albums — Forbert's *Alive on Arrival* and *Carlene Carter* — attracted reviews heralding significant new artists. Well, it's follow-up time for both and the moment when the artist must turn that initial inspiration into the beginnings of a career.

Forbert's debut was buoyed by his infectious enthusiasm, with even the weaker songs redeemed by his high spirits and the strength of the best of the material. With veteran pop-

rock producer Joe Wissert at the board, *Jackrabbit Slim* replaces the rough edges of the debut with greater craft in the arrangements and instrumental hooks. Still, this album settles once and for all that Forbert is no new Bob Dylan — this talent is too light and his message too trivial. But *Jackrabbit Slim* packages his skills in such an appealing way that, as with *Alive on Arrival*, his personality almost over-rides any doubts about his talent. Almost.

Carlene Carter also moves upmarket with her second album, *Two Sides to Every Woman*. Here, she opts for New York session-man backing to replace the Rumour who did the duties on her debut. Predictably, they provide a glossier surface to the music than Graham Parker's crew but Carter's tough country voice cuts through and provides the edge that makes the bulk of this album a success. This time Carlene Carter has written most of the songs and, while there is nothing as remarkable as "Slow Dance" on the first album, the best material here suggests that Carter could yet develop into a major songwriter.

Two to watch in the eighties.

**Alastair Dougal**

### Marc Hunter Fiji Bitters CBS

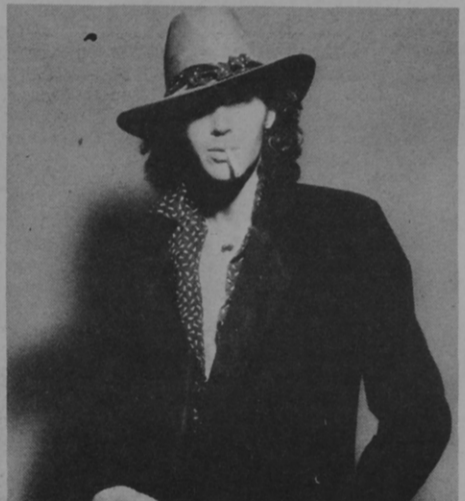
After Marc Hunter left Dragon it didn't take long for the band to die. This vocalist had real public appeal. His leaving was for solo sites, this album the first. It's good and easy, pleasant and tuneful, but for those Dragon fans who may be seeking it, it's not the resurrection.

Most of the tracks on *Fiji Bitters* are written by various combinations of Marc and/or Todd Hunter and/or Jenny Hunter-Brown. This gives them a kind of common denominator — relaxation. Not to say the production is sloppy or soporific. No, it's a holiday mood and even in the melancholic songs, the album does not rend but romp.

The single from the album is "Don't Take Me", which is catchy pop but just short of that magic sure-fire-hit-ability. That's the other common factor — not one of the tracks spells instant radio airplay by the currently cruddy standards. That's a shame because that's where this kind of album belongs. In fact, the only dud is "Casablanca" and perhaps that's just being contrary; Graham Brazier's song was very nicely recorded by Hello Sailor in very early days.

This album is not a rager to rattle the dead, but a collection of clear, catchy, up-beat songs. Look out for Marc Hunter on Sharon O'Neill's TV special this month and you'll see what I mean.

**Louise Chunn**



MARC HUNTER

### Gruppo Sportivo Mistakes Sire

This bunch of Dutch crazies do rock the singular honour of stealing just about everything that isn't nailed down, from the piano intro in "Nut Rocker" (spotted on "Mission A Paris") to a section of lyrics from Tom Petty's "Breakdown" ("Beep Beep Love").

Gruppo Sportivo occupy the same rocky plateau as the Tubes, taking a poke at whatever takes their fancy, from ultra-modern love to musical snobbery to the rat race. But their tongue is firmly in their cheek.

Their musical roots are closer to 1962 than 1979. Listen to the note-for-note copy of the organ break from "Runaway" in "Superman". Vocals are shared by the very strange Hans van den Burg and the delectable Gruppettes, Meike Touw and Jose van Iersel. Van den Burg resembles an inmate from a concentration camp and sings like just about anyone you'd care to name.

The stage act, apparently, is a riot. *Mistakes* confuse and amuses, and misses the target as often as it hits. But still, it's a diverting little exercise and keeps you on your toes.

All the songs are the work of one Van DeFruits. Anyone who can write a song that goes: "I shot my manager, cause he used to keep my royalties" has to have something going for them.

**Duncan Campbell.**



PETTY & HEARTBREAKERS (L-R), STAN LYNCH, MIKE CAMPBELL, RON BLAIR, TP & BENMONT TENCH.

SHOES (L-R), JEFF MURPHY, JOHN MURPHY, SKIP MEYER & GARY KLEBE.



GRUPPO SPORTIVO