

## THE TOURIST REALITY EFFECT LOGO

The Tourists suffer from an identity crisis, amongst other things. They don't know whether to commit themselves to Byrds influenced airy pop or to tackle something with a little more intellectual muscle.

*Reality Effect*, their second album, well and truly catches them in two minds. In their attempt to evolve something of their own they have tried to combine too many incompatible elements resulting in a diffusive, although not unpleasant, lightweight rock.

When winsome Ann Lennox takes lead vocal The Tourists could pass for 1980's Honeycombs (remember them?) and it's in this vein that they are most effective. "All Life's Tragedies", "Everywhere You Look" and "So Good to Be Back Home Again" have strong hooks and pass quite comfortably as attractive pop, and a belting version of Dusty Springfield's "I Only Want to be With You" is impressive. But Peet Coombe's lead vocals and Byrd's fixation, diluted mind you, are difficult to handle.

This band has too many pets on the boil. They need to sort themselves out and decide on a definite musical direction.

George Kay

## TOM VERLAINE ELEKTRA

Verlaine's troubles with Television in the last few months of their existence are certainly dim memories in the light of this determined and well organized solo album.

Always a picture of artistic aloofness, Verlaine's music flirted just a little too closely with condescension for mass approval, yet this cannot detract from the man's subtle talents in evidence for a third time on his first solo album.

Retaining the services of Television's Fred Smith on bass and drafting in Jay Dee Dougherty on drums, Verlaine knocks out two majestic gems on the first side, "Souvenir From a Dream" and "Kingdom Come", with the direct "Grip of Love" not being too far behind in the honours.

As fine as the first side is, it is only a dress rehearsal for faultless structures of the second. He's always been a guitarist of delicacy and imagination but on "Flash Lightning", "Red Leaves", "Last Night" and the climactic, "Breakin' In My Heart" he almost surpasses his previous standard as set on *Marquee Moon*.

*Tom Verlaine* is an album of poise and composure illustrating the man at his best.

George Kay

## SPLIT ENZ MENTAL NOTES FESTIVAL

Rumour has it that second-hand copies of the first pressing of *Mental Notes* have been



Tom Verlaine

changing hands at high prices, so it is not surprising that Festival have re-released the record. It is fast becoming a classic of NZ rock vinyl.

The original was released here on White Cloud, Barry Coburn's label, and on Mushroom in Australia. In addition to current members Tim Finn, Noel Crombie, and Eddie Rayner, the lineup at the time included Phil Judd, Mike Chunn, Wally Wilkinson (guitar), and Paul Crowther (drums). By 1975, the band had evolved into a highly structured unit, relying heavily on Eddie Rayner's keyboard talents. The songs are all Judd, or Judd-Finn compositions, and the result is Gothic rock.

About half of the album resurfaced on *Second Thoughts*, produced by Phil Manzanera in London. Manzanera brightened up the sound considerably, but left the arrangements largely untouched. Tracks not included on *Second Thoughts* are "Under The Wheel", "Spellbound", "May-be", "Amy" and "So Long For Now".

The cover features a Phil Judd painting which was damaged in transit, the result improving the painting's already surrealistic tone. For this pressing, the artwork was unavailable and the cover has been photographed from an existing sleeve, leaving a highly authentic patch where the price sticker had been.

If you've got an original copy, don't sell it cheap. *Mental Notes* still gives good ear, particularly if you're an Enz freak with a bent toward the weightier stuff. Recommend reading, and compulsory for collectors.

John Malloy

## REGGAE

Four discs up for scrutiny this time around, and in front by a country mile are the magical *Gladiators*, whose succession of fine albums on Virgin's Front Line label have provided some of the most iry riddims in recent years.

Their latest work, *Sweet So Till*, is pure joy, from its dazzling cover to the surpassing harmonies contained therein. Griffiths, Fearon and Sutherland have made their happiest, sexiest album to date. Jah Music is not all clenched fists and righteous indignation, as the *Gladiators* prove on this delightful platter.

On the same label comes the *Front Line Vol III* sampler, continuing the trend set by its predecessors. It shows well what the label's wide variety of artists are achieving, and encourages further buying. Let's not lose the opportunity to capitalise on this, and make sure the whole albums are released.

Tracks in this selection include "Lonely Girl" by the truly fine Gregory Isaacs, whose voice is as sweet as melting honey. The *Gladiators*' "Get Ready" is already available here on the *Naturality* set, reviewed in the last roundup and well worth the greenbacks. You'll also find contributions by the erratic Twinkle Brothers, The Abyssinians and the Mighty Diamonds, whose best work still only turns up occasionally in the import bins. Those who love a dub and a toast get I Roy, U Roy, Prince Far I and Sly Dunbar, who is better in the background than trying to record his own albums.

*Culture* also get a track from their latest release, *International Herb*, which has emerged here on the strength of their previous two best-known works. Those acquainted already with this trio will need no further urging, even though it's a lightweight by comparison. Let's hope they find a new deal, and soon.

**Dennis Brown**, whose tracklist spreads over many years, has a reputation second to none, having produced some phenomenal singles with Studio One and Joe Gibbs, and three pacesetting albums for Lightning, DEB and Third World Records. But sadly his latest, *Words of Wisdom* (Atlantic) fails to live up to expectations. Gibbs is again in control and has a major hand with the material, but the songs are too similar, as are the arrangements. Better check out the *Live at Montreux*, now here on import, which shows Brown in full cry.

Duncan Campbell

## IN BRIEF

### Peter Green, In The Skies (Creole)

Green founded Fleetwood Mac and his guitar playing made it one of the few credible British blues bands. He made some classic rock sounds ("Albatross", "Black Magic Woman") before vanishing, a victim of crippling self-doubt (Scorpio, y'know).

This is his first record in nearly 10 years and, not surprisingly, it develops musical themes sketched by Green a decade ago in his "Man of the World", a cult single — minor moods, hurt vocals, delicately layered guitars.

Peter Green opted out of the rock mainstream long ago. He seems content to remain a talented outsider, not unlike J.J. Cale, another individual voice.

**David Bowie, Twenty Bowie Classics (Decca)** This is another re-issue of Bowie's soft mod beginnings on Decca 1966-70.

Sounding like a public school Anthony Newley most of the songs are too formative and immature to endure a 1980 perspective. But, occasionally, as on "London Boys" and "Silly Boy Blue" he hints at the command of style that was to make him man of the seventies.

### The Very Best of Fats Domino (UA)

Fats Domino had a string of hits stretching back even before the words "rock and roll" were coined. He was no flamboyant personification of teen rebellion like Presley or Jerry Lee Lewis, but he had a lot of Deep South style. That style scarcely changed in 30 years — good-humoured New Orleans rock, friendly like home-cooking and lots of fun.

The 16 tracks here include such rock collection essentials as "Blue Monday", "I'm Ready" and "Ain't That a Shame".

**Eddie Cochran, The Very Best Of (United Artists)**

He may have lacked the cutting edge of the top-flight fifties rockers but Eddie Cochran made several excellent singles between 1956 and his death in 1960. Notable are the great "Twenty Flight Rock", and several songs more recently revived by others — "Summertime

Blues", "C'mon Everybody" and "Something Else". They're all here, along with a number of his less memorable moments.

AD  
Mick Taylor, (CBS)

This album has been on the horizon since 1974 when Taylor quit the Stones and, as expected, it displays his skills as a guitarist and his shortcomings as a songwriter.

On "Slow Blues" and "Giddy Up", both instrumentals, he shows why he's one of the best white blues guitarists, but vocally and in a song format he's never more than pleasantly adequate.

An undemanding album and not nearly as bad as it could have been.

### Best of the J. Geils Band (Atlantic)

The Geils band were and, to an extent, continue to be dedicated to the values of good-timing rhythm-and-blues. Never really fashionable, but not forgotten either. They are now with another label, but singer Peter Wolf has assembled nine tracks from six of their Atlantic albums. He has chosen well. The record hangs together as an album and in this regard is probably better than any single Geils album before or since.

**Sly and the Family Stone, Back On the Right Track (Warner Bros)**

*Back On the Right Track* it's called and back is right, for it shows Sly reverting to old styles both in subject matter and musical style. Still, it was a great style and even if nothing here attains the standards of his past, it all grooves past pleasantly enough.

### Hall and Oates, X-Static (RCA)

Hall and Oates paid their dues years ago with *Abandoned Luncheonette* and since then they have successfully worked on the smoother fringes of rock keeping one eye on the musical climate and the other on radio playlists.

*X-Static* is further evidence that they can write standard FM music with consummate ease. Glossy and safe, but if that's your thing then here it is.

### Bonnie Pointer (Motown)

Since their split the Pointer sisters have gone distinctly separate ways — the other three into a more mainstream rock approach under the guiding hand of producer Richard Perry and Bonnie into what was once called soul. Bonnie's direction may prove to be the more interesting. She has an excellent voice with an emotional range wider than most. Sadly the disco overtones may cause her to be overlooked. A shame because she is considerably more than an accompanist to a rhythm machine.

**Jimmy and the Boys, Not Like Everybody Else (Interfusion)**

Another gross over-the-top Aussie collective, Jimmy and the Boys merge the Tubes with Alice Cooper in an effort to be controversial and original. They miss on both counts, but their version of Ray Davies' "I'm Not Like Everybody Else" has some theatrical impact, something their own material strives for but fails ludicrously.

And you wonder why New Zealand bands do so well in Oz.

### Kevin Borich Express, Live! (Interfusion)

The former Aucklanders lays down a solid, straightforward R&B workout before enthusiastic audiences in Melbourne and Wollongong. On a good night Borich can kick up a storm, and there are some good moments here, but in the final analysis they are moments only. It's boozey boogie and maybe you had to be there; audience involvement riffs don't come across too well on record, and I for one certainly didn't need yet another song about playing rock and roll on the road ("K.B.'s Boogie"). Although not worth the price of the album, his "Little Red Rooster" (dedicated to Brian Jones) is a nice exercise in grease.

**Thin Lizzy, The Continuing Sage of the Ageing Orphans (Decca)**

Not new material but a compilation from Lizzy's first three albums recorded on Decca.

Lynott's approach has changed little since those early days and it's no surprise this album contains a number of excellent vintage Lizzy songs, "Things Ain't Working Out Down At the Farm", "Slow Blues", "Dublin" and "Brought Down", especially the latter; that could rub shoulders with Lynott's recent best. Recommended.

### Bob James and Earl Klugh, One on One (CBS)

The masters of easy-listening mock-jazz join forces to make music that is immaculately crafted but empty. The line-up of top session players doesn't do anything to alter the impression of talents lying dormant. To be fair, it must be noted that *One on One* has topped jazz charts in America. But as any rock fan can attest chart success doesn't rule out quality — nor is it any guarantee.

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