

CHICK COREA & HERBIE HANCOCK
AN EVENING WITH ...
POLYDOR
ROY BUCHANAN
LIVE IN JAPAN
POLYDOR
FRANK ZAPPA
JOE'S GARAGE ACTS II & III
CBS
TOM SCOTT
STREET BEAT
CBS

Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock are absolute piano masters. Their monumental skills at the keyboard have been somewhat obscured by their recent infatuations with electronic instrumentation, and, in Hancock's case, dance music.

This double album is the second set from a series of concerts Corea and Hancock made in 1978. The music is made by two men at two grand pianos (as they say today, *acoustic* pianos) and resounds with the sheer joy of making music. These are duets not duels and the playing is of the highest order, by turns stately and meditative, festive and fiery, notes cascading in waterfalls.

One can only lament that the earlier album was not released here.

Roy Buchanan is a virtuoso of a different cut, an electric guitarist who at his best can make time stand still. In the past Buchanan has had difficulty finding a suitable context for his talents. This live album may be as close as he gets. It is mainly straight-ahead funky blues-rock with the emphasis where it should be, on Buchanan's searing, soaring Telecaster lines. "Hey, Joe", a tribute to the moods of Jimi Hendrix, is breath-taking.

Equally spellbinding is Frank Zappa's guitar work on the double album that continues and concludes his cautionary tale of a near-future when music is outlawed. Perhaps *Act I* was stronger in songs, but Zappa's simply superb guitar playing (especially on the 10-minute "Watermelon in Easter Hay") puts the seal on his most satisfactory extended work.

With nice understatement, Zappa conceded his playing was "not bad, for a comedy record."

Rather less provocative is Tom Scott's latest offering. Scott's ability as a horn player is never in doubt, but his albums tend to reflect his years of studio work, correct but a shade bloodless. *Street Beat* is relentlessly percussive, uptempo freeway music, perhaps a little too close in intention to the Crusaders' similarly named *Street Life*.
Ken Williams

MENTAL AS ANYTHING
GET WET
REGULAR RECORDS

At last an Aussie band (since the Sports) worth crowing about. Mental As Anything started life as an East Sydney Art School band



Flying Lizards



U.K. Subs

playing pubs back in 1976. Since then they've graduated beyond the pub circuit but the basic feel of the band remains firmly rooted in their unpretentious beginnings.

With two snappy writers in tow, guitarists Martin Plaza and Reg Mombassa and two more as a rearguard, keyboards' player Greedy Smith and bassist Peter O'Doherty, the band have a wealth of tight, disciplined and lively songs to draw on — and fourteen of them appear on *Get Wet*, their debut album.

Opening with their single, "The Nips Are Getting Bigger" — a clean-as-you-please drinkers' rocker written by Martin Plaza, the band quickly reveal Nick Lowe/Dave Edmunds' influences. But that's praise. Mombassa's "Business and Pleasure" sports a cunning keyboard melody and again on "Can I Come Home" he shows he can write pertinent rock ditties.

These guys are non-stop smack so they deserve their recently negotiated deal with Virgin records who will release this album in Britain. All that remains to be said is that *Get Wet* is the sort of start they need. Sprinklers anyone?

George Kay

SPARKS
TERMINAL JIVE
VIRGIN

This is real disco eleganza, this one. The Mael brothers have produced another stylish essay in this much-maligned genre.

The sleek monochrome cover provides a clue to the aesthetic behind the disc. On the front side of the cover, the two Maels are seen on either side of the plate glass window of a supermarket. On the reverse, they are perched, in a "Toy Kingdom". It is certainly a game of Odd Man Out, and this is the position the two musicians hold with respect to the disco set.



Horn and Downes, Buggles.

But disco is here to stay, and the Maels have utilised their superlative musicianship to make a disco album to end all disco albums — as if last year's *No 1 in Heaven* wasn't enough!

The group seem to be in top form melodically — songs like "When I'm With You" and "Just Because You Love Me" are eminently catchy little pieces. The strongly-hewn harmonic shifts of "Rock 'n' Roll People in a Disco World" still pack a punch for me, and the boys show how effectively they can mould a more pop-orientated styling in a song like "Young Girls".

In four syllables...superlative.

William Dart

UK SUBS
ANOTHER KIND OF BLUES
GEM

If you wanna think about it, the punk movement that reacted against the gauche sentiments of seventies rock was a kind of blues' boom. Punks mourned and moaned about being bored, about the social set-up and about old rich businessmen peddling fatuous music, but instead of using the traditional twelve-bar format to communicate this dissatisfaction they used thunderstruck monotone rock'n'roll. In other words using raw, uncluttered music to drive home the message — another kind of blues.

The UK Subs (formerly the United Kingdom Subversives) look and sound like they have just stepped out of 1977, but like the late (and hardly lamented) Sham 69 they have a cult following that would die for them. *Another Kind of Blues* is their first album and it boasts seventeen songs that could have been one, most of them hounding one thing or another in that naive shouted sincerity that only punks can muster.

Yet there's no denying that the Subs are for real and are carrying the banner that many thought the clash relinquished on *Give 'Em Enough Rope* and the Jam were too mod to handle in the first place. Whatever your view *Another Kind of Blues* is not only alternative breakneck blues but a resurrection of the spirit of 1977.

I'll pass but punks queue here.

George Kay

MIDNIGHT OIL
HEAD INJURIES
POWDERWORKS

What gives with these *RIU* guys? Cammick tells me that he couldn't find anyone "remotely interested in these Ockers". Chris Knox reckons "Kiwis need to be told how to react." Right. But f**k that, I don't need *NME* to tell me what to praise.

As it is, *Head Injuries* isn't the hottest album around, but it does contain three instant gems — "Cold Cold Change", "Section 5" and "Back On The Borderline" and if you hang around for a few listens a couple more goodies will surface.

On first hearing, *Head Injuries* appears directionless. In fact, Midnight Oil are one of those rare products of the late-70s whose compositions work along shifting moods, while the complementary lyrics (very Ocker, incidentally) are a series of vivid images or:

*We're playing the music of the middle-aged queens
Getting fatter and fatter and splitting their jeans
It's all the same, we're out in the cold
The good ones died, the others just got old ...*
Johnny Rotten would have been proud.

Me, I'm still digging and coming up with the odd pearl which wasn't originally apparent. Keep passing on the Oz Rock, Murray. Leave the other stuff to the experts.

John Dix

BUGGLES
THE AGE OF PLASTIC
ISLAND
BRUCE WOOLEY
AND THE CAMERA CLUB
ENGLISH GARDEN
EPIC

The connection, although not obvious, is simple. Clever-young-man-from-the-Midlands-with-the-Elton-John-glasses, Bruce Wooley collaborated with Horn and Downes (Buggles) on a few songs. Wooley has since formed his own band, the Camera Club, and has recorded his own version of the song he co-wrote, "Video Killed the Radio Star".

That's a song people love to say they hate coz it's twee and tacky, yet, admit it, it's catchy and cleverly produced and put-together. Anyway, on the strength of that, Buggles, then only a studio concept, became known in every home, and they threaten to repeat that success with their debut album *The Age of Plastic*.

The album reveals Buggles to be a studio contrivance repeatedly capable of conjuring up instantly memorable hooks dressed up in juvenile lyrics about the increasing role of technology. The music would like to be tomorrow's MOR but it doesn't have the vision.

By comparison Bruce Wooley is on the ball. Borrowing new wave trappings (short songs, drainpipe trousers and short hair) he's managed to concoct an effective mixture of commercialism and energy. His songs are sleek and literate, perhaps a little over descriptive, but he has spark and even a little inspiration as he proves on "You're the Circus I'm the Clown".

And anyone who can revamp the Dave Clark Five's "Glad All Over" under the title of "Flying Man" AND get away with it deserves credit for nerve alone. Wooley is OK.

George Kay

THE FLYING LIZARDS
VIRGIN

On the strength of their first single, "Money" a lot of people have taken up the Flying Lizards as this year's B52s. There is a similar appeal. The mastermind behind the Lizards, David Cunningham, is an 'art school' musician who recorded the original "Money" in an old slaughterhouse converted into a studio.

Now he has called upon the services of 16 other musicians to produce this album. But the Flying Lizards do not show the same depth of talent as the B52s, and the temptation is to dismiss them as one-hit wonders.

"Money", undeniably a clever single, is the high point of the album. For those interested, that distinctive drum beat is produced by hitting the snare drum with a drum stick and a tambourine. There are a couple of other interesting moments. "Summertime Blues" is one simply because it is hard to totally destroy the Eddie Cochran/Who classic. The new single, "TV", is an effective novelty, featuring the same vocalist as "Money" and a nice tremolo guitar.

But really it's a case of one good single does not an album make.

Dominic Free

EDDY GRANT
WALKING ON SUNSHINE
ICE

If the name Eddy Grant means nothing to you, think back to the mid-60's, and a band called The Equals, who drove us all mad with moronic tunes like "Baby Come Back", "Viva Bobby Joe" and "Rub A Dub Dub."

The voice was that of Eddy Grant, who since then has embraced the Rasta faith, formed his own Ice label, and built his own Coach House studios. His Marco Music business is a thriving industry, giving recording opportunities to many struggling musicians, especially those from Third World countries.

He now has his first solo album out, and it's a credit to him. Not only has he written and produced all the tracks, but he does all vocals and plays all the instruments, with a little help occasionally from such worthies as Conrad Isidore and ex-Osibisa members Kofi Ayivor and Roy (Spartacus) Bedeau.

Roots reggae dominates the album, with Grant making extensive use of synthesiser. The instrument adapts surprisingly well to the idiom, being used not only as embellishment but also as rhythm. Grant makes very heavy noises in "Living On The Frontline", which dovetails into a meaty, extended synthesiser workout called "The Frontline Symphony."

Side Two is uptown, knees-up party music, with Grant's voice far more reminiscent of his old days. You can take the man away from the pop music...

A record full of unexpected pleasures from a man who obviously knows where he's going.

Duncan Campbell

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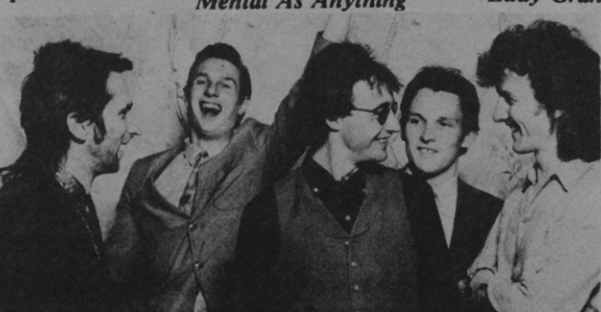
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