



Sports

SPORTS SUDDENLY! MUSHROOM

The Sports' first album, *Don't Throw Stones*, was irrefutable proof that Australian rock had come of age (whatever that means). Seriously though, folk, it was a rather nifty album with a more than memorable title track. The second album, *Suddenly!*, is even more satisfying.

Produced again by Pete Solley and recorded in London, *Suddenly!* is altogether a rockier sound. The band play with utmost push, alternating gale-force rockers with high-speed harmonising and the odd ballad.

At a time when many bands are wondering what to do next, the Sports sound more confident than ever.

Once again, the title track is a grabber. The team of Steve Cummings and Andrew Pendlebury, who write most of the songs, could become the Jagger-Richard of the 80s. Like the Stones, they're not that long on melody, but they lay down high-octane songs with relentless hooks.

There are a lot of good songs here. Apart from the superlative title track, there is "Between Us", "It Hurts", "Murmurs", and the ballad "Blue Hearts", which manages the near-impossible of sounding both sincerely heartfelt and tongue-in-cheek — and working on both levels. This particular track demonstrates the superb production of the album, as delicately layered voices and instruments ebb and flow around Cummings' aching voice. Compare this one with the sort of thing 10cc were doing about the time of *How Dare You*, before the ideas went.

Suddenly! is the sort of album that comes along only rarely. Each listening offers new pleasures.

Ken Williams

THE CURE SEVENTEEN SECONDS STUNN

"There are two very obvious traps to fall into. One is to take songwriting at face value and become a very entertaining pop band. The other is become a supposedly serious band."

The above statement was made by the Cure's kingpin, Robert Smith, late last year and serves to give some indication as to what this band is all about.

Their first album, *Three Imaginary Boys*, was a step or two beyond mere pop. It was a collage of coldly unique rock songs of muscle and imagination presented in a clever, if superfluous, packaging ploy. Their singles, on the other hand, were veering, quite pleasantly, towards the popular market. "Killing An Arab" was literary neuroses, but "Boys Don't Cry" and "Jumping Someone Else's Train" were ideally crafted pop gems containing deliberate hooks and guitar lines of exceptional quality. Perfect singles.

Up until now Smith, being singer, guitarist and songwriter, has managed to steer the band between throw-away pop and over-seriousness but *Seventeen Seconds* is a definite adoption of the latter. In some ways it is a unified extension of the artful ambience of "Fire in Cairo" and of the buoyancy of the last two singles, but essentially the new album is a sombre and pensive affair from a re-modelled Cure.

Since the release of "Train" Simon Gallup has replaced Michael Dempsey on bass and Matthew Hartley has been added on keyboards, and these changes have added more depth to the band.

Each side has a core of three songs placed between two creeping instrumentals, their function being to create the appropriate mood or add finishing touches to the main songs. "Play For Today", "Secrets", "A Forest" and "M" are the album's highlights, airy and straight-faced — they are strangely compelling. "In Your House" is doleful, though effective with it, something which can't be said for the pre-occupied pessimism of "At Night".

With much of *Seventeen Seconds* it is obvious that the Cure have needlessly abandoned their more positive and commercial elements in favour of a tenuous attempt at profundity. It's possible that Smith has over-reacted against the band's pop potential but the album does manage to achieve a fifty per cent success rate. And that's a pass. Just.

George Kay

MI-SEX SPACE RACE CBS

Every day, we're moving further away from a natural environment. We're surrounded by con-

RECORDS



Undertones

crete, raised on junk food, and computers do more and more of our thinking for us. Unless we blow ourselves up, we could evolve into a race of mutants; stunted and apathetic humanoids. The Space Race.

This, at least, is the premise behind the title track of the next Mi-Sex album. Nothing new in the sentiments, perhaps, but they're still relevant.

Space Race is an extension of, rather than a progression from, its predecessor, *Graffiti Crimes*. But this is not to belittle it. It's more of what Mi-Sex do extremely well, producing sharp, snappy music that combines the best of the "old" and "new" trends.

All the songs here are obviously geared for maximum impact on stage. They have pace and punch to spare, and you can sing along with all of them. Peter Dawkins produces again, and the final mix was done in New York, giving terrific depth to the sound, without burying the band.

Of the best tracks, "Pages And Matches" is an eerie, menacing number about fireraising, featuring ringing guitar by Kevin Stanton and a big kick from the rhythm section. "Living in September" steals part of the melody from our national anthem, narrating the current dire times in Godzone. "It Only Hurts When I'm Laughing" rubbishes any claim that Mi-Sex make cold, unemotional music. Steve Gilpin gives one of his finest vocal performances over a flowing, soaring guitar line.

"Ice Cold Dead" is the album's epic work, being Stanton's view of an infamous, unsolved New Zealand murder (see the interview elsewhere). A harrowing, lyrical piece, filled with bewilderment at violent death and why it happens:

*But it's time, time to leave
This madness of a place.
People never quite believe,
They merely trim the lace.*

Throughout, the band plays with a confident dynamism not always evident on the first album. Special mention must go to Murray Burns for intelligent, incisive keyboard work and a well-honed sense of melody.

Mi-Sex are making fine nuclear-age pop music. They've succeeded through sheer hard work, and *Space Race* is clear evidence of this.

Duncan Campbell

UNDERTONES HYPNOTISED SIRE

Sire's heaviest weights, Talking Heads, sing more songs about buildings and food. The label's fast-maturing little brothers, the Undertones, kick their second album off with a track called "More Songs About Chocolate And Girls". It's probably for the best this band doesn't get too big. They seem to work best, so far, from underneath, and the reputedly sad-eyed John O'Neill is on record as saying he wishes the Undertones career could be run from Derry. Derry? Jeez. If there is a rock'n'roll death in this band, it will be from changing a light bulb in the bath, not from any million dollar drug. And it won't be in Paris, or in Anita Pallenberg's bed.

Album one was highlighted by O'Neill's charging ra-ra roller coaster pop songs. This time the creative highs have been shared around, the younger O'Neill tapping Neil Finn-like on his brother's shoulder with gems in both hands. The debt to the first Ramones album is still undeniably there, and for those who want nothing more from the band, the peak comes on a Glitterised and glorious "Hard Luck" at the end of side one. But the aims and song styles are widening, the pace slowing just a little. "My Perfect Cousin" is the first Undertones single not written by John, and it's excellent. One can almost see the XTC comparisons being pulled out of the drawer for album three (and won't there be a lot of Kevins and Nigels starting school in 1985). There are no duffs here, at all, with even the solitary cover "Under The Boardwalk" surviving. And Fergal Sharkey's slight Roger Chapman vibrato vocal puts the all-important human icing on top.

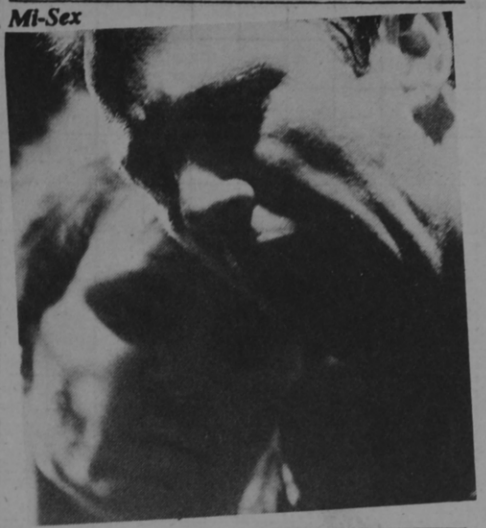
The Undertones are still a band their fans can touch.

Roy Colbert

LOU REED GROWING UP IN PUBLIC ARISTA

With *Growing Up In Public*, Reed has produced his most immediately approachable record since the 1972 *Walk on the Wild Side*. Not only do the two albums share an almost pop-orientated style (compare "Satellite of Love"

Mi-Sex



and the new "How Do You Speak To An Angel" for example) but the new album even has direct quotes from the older one. Perhaps the most obvious is the use of colored girl's chorus of "Walk on the Wild Side" in the song "Smiles".

Apart from the formal perfection of the Reed songs, there is the richness of the lyrics, most of which are delivered in Reed's superbly laconic, throwaway style. Some, like "My Old Man" and "Standing on Ceremony" have autobiographical elements whilst others are laced with Reed's characteristic sense of irony.

"The Power of Positive Drinking" is a vindication of Bacchian pleasures in reggae style, whilst "Keep Away" is a companion piece to "Sheltered Life" from the *Rock and Roll Heart* album, with Reed offering his new love everything from band-aids to rubber mallets and promising a complete formation for his lady of the moment. Then there are the clever para doxes of those "garish sickly smiles" of the song "Smiles" which has the archest of all maternal warnings:

My mum said unless someone sticks you right in front of a camera

A smile is the last thing you want to do.

A brilliant album by a fine artist.

William Dart

JOHNNY WINTER RAISIN' CAIN EPIC

After two recent outstanding blues albums, *Nothin' But the Blues* and *White, Hot & Blue*, and his revitalising of the career of Muddy Waters, Johnny Winter returns to a rock approach for *Raisin' Cain*. He screws up.

His recent good works suggested the spot-tiness of his recording past was well behind him, but this album is so slipshod one is at a loss as to why it was even released.

The music is raucous and harsh (more so than usual). The stridency of the whole affair is emphasised by Winter's thin self-production. Johnny gets to tear off a few nifty guitar licks but that's not enough to save the sinking ship, and his voice — albeit never a pretty sound — isn't capable of the nuance some of the material demands. In his hands "Like a Rolling Stone" becomes an interminable bore. In fact, nearly all the songs go on far too long so they seem to be merely reference points for guitar solos — a case of tails wagging dogs.

The impression is of an album made on the run, under-rehearsed, sloppily-played. Winter even trots out the Muddy Waters warhorse "Rollin' and Tumblin'" and delivers in a virtually identical version to that on his *Progressive Blues Experiment* album of a decade ago.

In my collection there are nine other Johnny Winter albums. Some are firm favourites, others are seldom played. All are more interesting than *Raisin' Cain*.

Ken Williams

ROBERT FRIPP UNDER HEAVY MANNERS /GOD SAVE THE QUEEN POLYDOR

By his own admission Robert Fripp's career can be divided into two main categories. The first being his collaboration with other musicians, ie King Crimson and Eno, and the second what he terms "Frippertronics", which is his indulgence in tape-looping electronics using two Revoxes, a mixing board and guitar.

Under Heavy Manners/God Save the Queen falls distinctly into the latter category, the two titles being the first and second sides respectively.

The first side is concerned with the use of the basic 4/4 disco rhythm as a platform for Fripp's excursions. The title track with a credited Absalm el Habib (I'd lay odds that it's David Byrne) on vocals is crazed and



Cure