

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS WHAT'S THE WORD TAKOMA

The Thunderbirds' follow-up to *Girls Go Wild* consolidates their position in the forefront of today's (white) blues players. The British have the Blues Band and a revitalised Eric Clapton. In America, there are the Thunderbirds, George Thorogood and John Hammond, who remains under-appreciated. The Thunderbirds have the most "authentic" sound, echoing as it does the 1950s bar blues of Chicago and Texas, their home ground.

More evident than on the first album is the debt to Little Walter, both in the amplified harp and vocal phrasing of Kim Wilson and the sparse, but driving, small-group arrangements. Speaking of small groups, the Thunderbirds do a great job of "Runnin' Shoes", which is from the repertoire of the Houston-based one-man band, Juke Boy Bonner.

Kim Wilson has been hailed by Muddy Waters as the best white blues singer he has heard, a sentiment which may be based equally on Wilson's undoubted abilities and the fact that his band effectively mirrors a time when Waters himself was at his peak. I continue to marvel at the way the Thunderbirds sound as if they missed the '60s and '70s entirely. That's by the by. They play with vigour and vitality.

Definitely a group to watch.

Ken Williams

MARIANNE FAITHFULL BROKEN ENGLISH ISLAND

Marianne Faithfull is a changed woman, no longer the naive, vulnerable-looking girl who took her image to its ultimate end, playing Ophelia to Nicol Williamson's Hamlet. The face that stares from the back of this album cover is bruised and tired.

The voice that once sweetly trilled "This Little Bird" and "Come And Stay With Me" has been eroded by booze and smack and too many Mick Jagger. It's now harsh and strained. The voice of a victim.

After a chequered career in movies and theatre, Faithfull returned to music three years ago, with a rather undistinguished album called *Faithless*. The band she subsequently took on the road plays on *Broken English*, and has helped create its finest moments.

The title track was inspired by a book about Germany's notorious urban guerillas, the Baader-Meinhof Gang. Over a loping bassline and Barry Reynolds' shimmering guitar, Faithfull sings:

What are you fighting for? It's not my security.

What are you dying for? It's not my reality

"Guilt" is her heroin nightmares revisited. It's a flesh-creeper that gives Uncle Lou a run for his money:

I feel guilt, though I know I done no wrong,
I feel guilt.
I feel blood, though I feel it in my veins,

It's not enough.
I want more

Shel Silverstein's poignant "Ballad Of Lucy Jordan" could have been written for Faithfull, and her version of Lennon's "Working Class Hero" leaves the Waipa MP's rather academic interpretation for dead.

There's a blank track at the end, where the sexually grotesque "Why D'Ya Do It" has been omitted from the New Zealand pressing.

Broken English is scarred and battered and a little erratic. Not one for the easily depressed, but when it works, it cuts to the bone.

Duncan Campbell



Marianne Faithfull

PINK MILITARY DO ANIMALS BELIEVE IN GOD? VIRGIN

Liverpool, the city responsible for the beat boom of the early sixties, is currently producing a second wave of talent. This time, however, it is pop psychedelia. Bands like Echo and the Bunnymen, Nightmares in Wax, the Teardrop Explodes, and the first band with a local release, Pink Military are all leading the new Mersey invasion.

Do Animals Believe In God clearly shows the two faces of Pink Military. Side One reveals inviting pop melodies, and Side Two warped noise-making, topped with Siouxsie-style vocals.

The opening cut, "Degenerated Man", makes way for two of the best tracks, "I Cry", and "Did You See Her", showing off some haunting keyboards and lyrical twists, with vocalist Jayne trying out her best Nico voice. Side One finishes with the dubious "After Hiroshima".

At this point, Jeckyll become Hyde, as Side Two lurches into the ominous "Living In A Jungle". Most of the rest, like "Heaven/Hell" is just too heavy, until "Do Animals Believe In God?" winds up the album with a spacey keyboard line straight out of the late sixties.

Although Side Two is sometimes stark and foreboding, it is not without its charms and provides the perfect foil for the eighties pop of the first side.

Mark Phillips



The Monochrome Set

THE MONOCHROME SET STRANGE BOUTIQUE DINDISC

The Set served their apprenticeship of three or so singles on the independent Rough Trade label and talk of Velvet Underground influences raised a few hopes for their debut album.

Strange Boutique has a tenuous link with the stylisations of John Cale and the Velvets but its true heart probably owes more to the unsettling simplicity of Syd Barrett (try "Goodbye Joe") and their own combination of eccentricity and occasional flippancy which coins an album that comes across fresh and free of contrivance.

"The Monochrome Set (I Presume)" highlights the band's best qualities: beginning with a simple drum pattern guitarist Lester Square picks out the rhythm and develops the melody for the entrance of Bid, vocalist, who has the laconic Art School nuances down pat. Crickets chirp in the background. "The Lighter Side of Dating", "Love Goes Down the Drain" and "Ici Les Enfants" add further proof of the Set's ability to mould straightforward notions with their own mildly disturbing ideas to produce black and white psychedelia circa 1980.

Whatever their sources of inspiration the Monochrome Set are infectious, unpretentious and definitely danceable.

George Kay

RICKY NELSON SINGLES ALBUM UNITED ARTISTS

In the list of rock heroes Ricky Nelson holds the middle ground, down a little from Berry, Presley and Lewis, ahead of Bill Haley, and rubbing shoulders with Gene Vincent and Eddie Cochran.

Nelson was a TV star who was inspired to become a rock and roll singer by Elvis. Nelson's voice was light, but tuneful, and what he had going for him were some excellent rockabilly backing musicians, most notably guitarist James Burton, who had been working with Johnny Burnette.

Johnny Burnette and his brother Dorsey wrote Nelson's hardest rocker, "Believe What You Say", which is one of the 20 tracks on *Singles Album*.

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21 XTC, 5 bands (Toy Love, Terrorways, Sheerlux, Hookers and Havoc), Eddie Money, Beserkley, Mi-Sex and Jazz History Part I.
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