

# RECORDS

Waits is the original downtown stumblebum, hand around a bottle and foot on the throttle. He doesn't just act it out, he lives it. Nobody could write such lucid visions of life and love on the rocks without having experienced them personally.

Sadly, the lifestyle seems to be overtaking him. His voice, never a thing of beauty, is now beyond repair, victim of too many bottles and Old Golds. He's just turned 31, but he sounds 60.

The music on *Heartattack* is written for a movie called 'On The Nickel'. From the sounds of it, it's a chronicle of Skid Row. The movie's title track is a tearjerking picture of old men dreaming of the bottle they've just finished and the next one to come.

By contrast, the album's title is Waits at his raunchiest. 'Downtown' and 'Mr Siegal' work in a similar vein, but they're artificial highs. A sense of melancholy fills the rest of the album, and hits much closer to home.

*Heartattack And Vine* is a musical milestone. But the lasting impression is of a dying flower. I only hope I'm wrong.

Duncan Campbell

**The Kinks**  
**Kinks**  
**Kinda Kinks**  
**The Kinks Kontroversy**  
**Pye**

A vital missing link in the rock chain is restored with the re-issue, in original mono, of the Kinks' first three albums from 1964 and 1965.

The debut album is a treasure trove of rock trivia. Here is the original version of 'Stop Your Sobbing'. There is 'You Really Got Me', with the distorted guitar Jimmy Page claims to have played, though Ray Davies says it was his brother Dave.

Most of the non-originals are taken at a pace, and with about the level of skill, that would have slotted in perfectly with the first wave of punk. Johnny Rotten could hardly have sounded more tortured than Ray Davies trying to slug his way through 'Beautiful Delilah'.

*Kinda Kinks* is a halfway mark between the raw enthusiasm of *Kinks*, and the dawning of the more familiar Davies' sophistication on *The Kink Kontroversy*. *Kontroversy* is the only album of the three that doesn't need historical or nostalgic backing to be worthwhile. Especially good is the song Bowie covered on *Pin-Ups*, 'Where Have All The Good Times Gone'.

The most interesting thing in 1980 about the Kinks of the mid-60s is that of all the groups of the time the Kinks show more ties to today's bands than any of the others.

Phil Gifford

# BRIEFS

**Velvet Underground, 1969 (Mercury)**  
As the title suggests, this double album was recorded in 1969. It features the Velvets performing in clubs in San Francisco and Texas just prior to the recording of *Loaded*.

Released overseas in 1974, it has taken six years and a chronic deterioration in sleeve quality for it to surface here. The sound is poor, but the songs are nothing short of superb. The material spans from the first Velvet Underground album to Lou Reed's solo debut, and includes many numbers otherwise unavailable here.

To call this a classic live album would be an understatement. Now, how about releasing the rest of the band's unavailable catalogue? MP  
**David Hollis, 'En Zed Musical Animals and Things (It's kidstuff)**

Background: Hollis used to be on television in Stu's show. Hollis plays guitar and sings. Test marketing: one weekend on a nine-year-old. She now knows all the words to a song called 'Wottenwood Weka' and can keep up with the fast bits in 'The Rugger'. The verdict: The most popular kids' record at our place since Spike Milligan's *Badjelly The Witch*. PG

**The Ruts, Grin and Bear It (Virgin)**

In July this year Malcolm Owen, vocalist and lyricist with the Ruts, died of a heroin overdose. This signalled the end of the first phase of the band, a phase epitaphed by an album of odds'n'ends, *Grin and Bear it*.

It contains a few strong-arm, partisan punk, boot boy dramas, namely 'Staring At the Rude Boys', 'West One' and 'Love In Vain', that rise above their rough but solid ordinariness. And as a vocalist Owen was certainly distinctive in the Joe Strummer angst and rasp mould, but it's a pity that the band couldn't, in their brief period with Owen, have produced a more accomplished repertoire. Their songs were always too self-consciously revolutionary, too honed to the brainless boot boy market. Who's grinning? GK

**The Roches, Nurds (WEA)**

The McGarrigle Sisters of New England, the Roches' folkie feel has slipped back on this second album as Roy Halee throws a bit more into the backings — the very English-folk of 'Factory Girl' standing as an intriguing exception. Sharp, vocally nifty razzmatazz with the expected lyric hilarity ('The Death Of Suzy Roche', 'The Boat Family' and 'This Feminine Position'). The Roches' peak remains the excellent Side One on album one, but *Nurds* still has some lovable moments. 'Louis' and 'One Season' are nice, and the cover's great, but two albums might just be enough from these ladies. RC

**Gruppo Sportivo, Copy Copy (Ariola)**

Translated means Sports Group, a Dutch band who have been plugging away these last few years with an infectious brand of throwaway satirical pop. Catchy and clever with a humorous lyrical bent, their music en bloc however, is far too pleased with itself without reason. A slight, flippant and insubstantial album. GK

**Huey Lewis & The News (Chrysalis)**

San Franciscan rockers with tenuous Angloid links — Huey has worked with Dave Edmunds and Nick Lowe, writing for the former, and Sean Hopper played keyboards on the first Costello album. They play bouncy effective pop-riff-rock, occasionally recalling a younger Nils Lofgren (before people started telling Lofgren he was a guitar hero). The first side hardly misses, and 'Hearts' on Side Two is real good. But Huey and the boys are working in a densely populated area, where 'reasonably good' means 'forgettable'. The surfboard pic on the back won't help them either. RC

**Jethro Tull, A (Chrysalis)**

Ian Anderson's album for the 80s really falls a little flat on its face. Songs about the Iranian Embassy siege and imminent nuclear holocausts don't really come off, and the most effective track for me is the folkie-flavoured 'Pine Marten's Jig', although even this is really just a trek back into Fairport Convention country. WD

**The Blues Band, Ready (Arista)**

The second Blues Band album is, as you would expect, very competent, lovingly-played blues, both standards ('Hallelujah, I Love Her So', 'I'm Ready') and originals ('Noah Lewis Blues', 'SUS Blues', 'Can't Hold On'). The playing is faultless, but hardly very striking, with singer Paul Jones, who has an excellent voice, continually imitating black styles, instead of using a little of his own distinctive phrasing. I imagine they'd be a great band live, though. DMcL

**Japan, Gentlemen Take Polaroids (Virgin)**

There was a time when Japan played semi-heavy metal and did New York Dolls' impressions. The make-up is still just as thick, but on their fourth album they venture into the fashionable world of electronics.

Vocalist David Sylvain croons his Ferry-derived voice over a sometimes dreary, bass-heavy beat. The result is not far removed from Eno-period Roxy Music, without the wit.

The album does rise to a few highlights, notably the title track and the disco-driven 'Ain't that Peculiar'. MP

**Alan Parsons Project, The Turn of a Friendly Card (Arista)**

The hands of the clock are turned back to the late sixties and the American studio group, Neon Philharmonic. Alan Parsons' new concept album is fairly predictable and polished on its own terms, but ultimately lifeless and trite in its lyrics and music. No, Virginia the song 'Games People Play' is not by Joe South ... would that it had been. WD

# LIVE

**Kiss, Techtones**  
**Western Springs, December 3.**

"Something to read while you're waiting," says the friendly young Christian in the car park. "Kiss aren't the only instrument of Satan — we all are!" informs the pamphlet. This is the last thing we want to hear — there are 20,000-plus Aucklanders here tonight, all hell-bent to ride the back of the beast. If Kiss don't shape up as 24-carat stooges of Satan I'm sure I won't be alone in my disappointment.

The Techtones appear undaunted by the massed Kiss Army, providing what must be one of the best support sets ever at the Springs. They finish with 'That Girl', drowning the scattered moans of 'We want Kiss', and leave the stage amid a healthy round of applause.

A lengthy break while the stage is thoroughly swept (a stray jelly baby on the boards could prove lethal to a platform-booted bassist), then unveiled to reveal a somewhat larger version of the type of set of which Gary Glitter was once so fond. Now a cascade of dry ice engulfs the front ranks of the audience as the four emissaries of the pit rise into view on hidden elevators, and a large segment of the crowd screams in anticipation of the mayhem to follow.

So this is a Kiss concert. Four guys dressed as Japanese monsters from outer space who sing about such healthy subjects as firehouses, conversation, and teenage lust. Paul Stanley's introductory patter is probably identical to that used by the likes of Van Halen and Wet Willy — i.e. they are gonna rock, party, and kick ass 'til the cows come home. The show roars on, studded with explosions, costume changes, gouts of flame, and more dry ice. Gene Simmonds is the obvious monster-in-residence, a virtuoso on the platform boots, but a somewhat minimal bassman. New drummer Eric Carr does everything expected of a megadeath skinbasher, including two equally boring drum solos (or is it one with a hole in the middle?).

Ace Frehley is the surprise of the night, with an unexpectedly entertaining guitar solo, complete with rockets which appear to shoot from the neck of his instrument. His own song 'New York Groove' is the musical high point of the show, followed closely by a heavy metal mind-grind treatment of the Stones' '2000 Men'. Four carefully choreographed encores culminate in a massive fireworks display, leaving the audience feeling meek and cheerful. Kiss are good clean boys who eschew the use of tacky gadgets such as lasers and synthesisers. No chickens were beheaded, and if they do have the neutron bomb they didn't use it.

Joe Wylie



Gene Simmons, Kiss.

**Mockers, Innocents**  
**Terminus**

Support band, the Innocent are partially knackered on the night by a peculiar mix, which buries the guitars under a booming bass and drums. Their usual biting, Clash-style rock and roll is left a little toothless. They can, and usually do, perform a lot better and given time to assemble more originals they could become top-drawer artistes.

The Mockers kick off with 'Speechless'. Curtis, Mannell and Monaghan, the workers, thump out the long instrumental intro. But the fans are waiting for the star of the show. And he comes out right on cue, wearing the supercilious leer of a school boy straight from his first naughty behind the bike shed, the one and only Andrew Fagen (cue squeals from the young ladies).

For the rest of the evening the irresistible brat holds the audience's attention. Add Mannell's Moonishly agricultural drumming, Monaghan's distinctive guitar and Curtis' bass and organ to hold it together, and you have an uncommonly well-matched combination. Highlights of the set are 'Watching You', 'Human Gap', 'Trendy Lefties' and 'Good Old Days'. All good, no-bullshit pop.

A potentially *great* band. It's about time they stopped farting around, went full-time and wrote some new songs.

People with less talent have made millions.

Les Crew

**Yo Yos (Comics)**  
**Gladstone, November 15.**

The passes said "Comics" but the advertising opted for the Yo Yo bit as well. The reality is that the Comics are no more. Front-man John Purvis and bassist Xtine Simpson have now joined forces with Nancy Kiel and Danny Bennett under the banner of the Yo Yos. That much sorted out, this week at the Gladstone marked their first outing.

We arrived late to the accompaniment of the opening strains of 'White Rabbit' of days gone by. The prospect was hardly promising. If ever there has been a song with latitude for dreadful cover versions it is this one. But after a difficult start, these Yo Yos provided a very pleasant surprise. Nancy Kiel gave her voice full rein from behind her keyboards, and the result was magnificent.

As the lights bathed the stage in colour, the parachute backdrop and John Purvis' long hair and granny glasses made it hard to believe that this was Christchurch in 1980. What I am told was a more than creditable version of Eno's '801' thing followed and the Yo Yos were doing pretty well.

From then on, however, limitations began to appear. The Yo Yo's approach is cover versions of songs we're supposed to know and love interspersed with the occasional original. As far as original numbers go, 'Portrait Of the Artist...' sets the tone; workmanlike and competent but never inspiring and never transcending influences. Put uncharitably, they reek of tokenism, but it's probably more accurate to say that too much effort has been expended in getting the non-originals down pat, and as long as that continues the Yo Yos are going to be standing dead still.

For me, those cover versions are also a bone of contention. 'White Rabbit' was obviously one off the bottom of the pack, because the remainder are mind-numbingly obvious. Songs like 'Fire In Cairo', 'Heaven', 'Baby's On Fire' and especially 'Private Life' are over-exposed to the point where bands playing carbon copies are wasting everybody's time. There is more to life than dancing, but if you want to go for covers, surely less obvious material can be found.

In my opinion, the Yo Yos are selling themselves well short by approaching their craft in such a pedestrian manner. They have the musical ability and the resources, especially Nancy Kiel, to do a lot better.

Michael Higgins


**Swingers**  
**Hearts, Melbourne, November 15.**

It's now five months since the Swingers left New Zealand and headed for the land of Things To Do.

Currently, they are on about the same level financially as they were in New Zealand. But while, here, they were one of a handful of top touring bands, in Melbourne alone they were just one of one hundred and twenty playing this particular Saturday night.

Have they changed? The coloured shirts still feature; Buster's hair is longer; Phil's is shorter, and Bones now sings a song. There are five new numbers, and perhaps the same

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