

RECORDS

Jam
Sound Affects
Polydor

The Jam have had it both ways. They've maintained their initial punk following thanks to their stripped down energy and intelligent use of mod trappings. And they've continued to seduce the survivors of the sixties with their uncanny feel for past classic noises. Like the best Toy Love moments ('Rebel', 'Don't Ask Me' and 'Swimming Pool') the Jam have the knack of encapsulating the core and spirit of British Invasion sixties' rock into their very own shell.

Sound Affects is the third in a series of puns and the third in a trio of vital albums that have seen the extension and refinement of Paul Weller as perhaps the single most important writer in British rock'n'roll. As in the kids-growing-up *Setting Sons* Weller hits you with an almost flawless first side and so leaving the reverse for his few weak patches.

'Pretty Green' opens and is basic controlled Jam, but, next up, 'Monday' is Weller's most attractive and mature love song to date, it haunts you and provides an ideal contrast for their Beatles' 'I Feel Fine' inspired 'But I'm Different Now' and the climatic 'Set the House Ablaze'. The first blemish is 'Start' and it is disappointing utilisation of the Fab Four's 'Taxman' bass riff. But 'That's Entertainment', acoustic and danceable, shows Weller's ironic observational powers at their best.

Light going out and a kick in the balls — That's entertainment.

Setting Sons was let down by 'Smithers-Jones' and a rather unnecessary cover of 'Heatwave'. This time an ungainly band effort, 'Music For the Last Couple' let the side down, and the closer, 'Scrape Away' battles with a pale tune. Smiles all round though for 'Dream Time' which continues where the exquisite 'Dreams of Children' (flip of 'Going Underground') left off, and 'Man in the Corner Shop' and 'Boy About Town' are both gilded Weller melodies.

Paul Weller is changing. The cynicism and the bitter winces at realism are still there ('That's Entertainment', 'Pretty Green' and 'Set the House Ablaze') but there are love songs here ('Monday' and 'But I'm Different Now') that he would have been incapable of writing in the past and they certainly augur well for the future.

The sons continue to grow.
George Kay

The Cramps
Songs The Lord Taught Us
Illegal

The background to this album, finally available here, is a story or two in itself. There's the eccentric Mad Daddy for starters, to say nothing of Seattle's mercurial Sonics, who made garage punk thunder in 1964-66 before anyone knew what garage punk was or

Jam



should be. The Sonics have given the Cramps 'Strychnine' on this album. They also, in 1965, did the best version of 'Louie, Louie' you'll ever hear. And finally there's producer Alex Chilton, who thinks the Cramps are the best rock'n'roll band in the world, and whose own every post-Box Tops' musical move is an absolute must-have.

The spine on the American sleeve of the Cramps' album says 'file under sacred music'. Ha. With lines like 'is it a skin condition or an extra eye?' it is clear the Cramps are far from devout. They play modern bizarre razor-edged echo-and-reverb rockabilly, aping all the madness of that genre but pointedly staying well clear of slavish copyists like Robert Gordon and Dave Edmunds. Chilton's decision to make the record in Sam Phillips' Memphis studio (where even John Prine was made to sound reasonable) is the icing on the cake — the sound of this record is unbelievable. Only the Trashmen have ever threatened to achieve anything similar.

The Sonics, all of whom probably own hardware stores in the mid-west by now, would be real proud of the way the band does 'Strychnine', while the record's bona fide classics come early on Side One with 'TV Set' and 'Garbage Man'. For the Cramps, three chords are sometimes two too many.

There's even a tasteful cover of Peggy Lee's 'Fever' at the end of side two. So tasteful it was a single. *Songs The Lord Taught Us* sounds like a glorious never-again oncer. A curio best never repeated. But there is more — besiege CBS to release the *Gravest Hits* EP as well. It's just as good.

Roy Colbert

Coup D'Etat
Polygram

So often, the verdict on Coup D'Etat live seems to be the same — "great playing, but I drifted away". They have so far lived their life under the handicap of inspiring respect rather than devotion.

With the large-scale success of their last single, 'Doctor I Like Your Medicine' they are in

Class of '81's North Shore contingent, photo Anthony Phelps



a position to change all that with a rarity in local music circles — the perfectly-timed album release. Unfortunately, the album seems to be pretty much in line with the story so far: near faultless playing and well developed melodies but short of a spark.

Coup D'Etat is produced by the group, and perhaps it is there that the trouble lies. The sound is crisp and workmanlike, but also rather two-dimensional. Perhaps a step back from the determined DIY stance might lift the sound out of the grooves a little more. A little more rigorous self-criticism about the writing might also do the trick. Some of the words on 'Taxi', for example are better left unrepeatable, and 'Naughty But Nice' and the Blondie-derived 'Closer To You' are both a little slight to be occupying almost half of Side One.

All these reservations aside, there is no doubt that Coup D'Etat have got it in them to make good albums. This one is a long way there on the strength of 'Doctor' and 'No Music On My Radio' alone. And it really is great playing.

Francis Stark

Class Of '81
Propeller

After several successful singles, Propeller Records have released their first album. In many ways it is the successor to AK 79, but unlike that they have only started gigging since the recording of the album.

Five of Side One's six bands are from the North Shore of Auckland. First are the Ainsworths. 'Danger Man' is good clean pop — melodic and hook-laden, it would make a great single. The Bombers' contribution is 'Dance'. A nice bass riff, with sparse guitar and a big debt to the Mekons. Next are the Newmatics, the only southerners. 'Five Miseries' is ska-injected rock. Thoughtful and tasty, it leaves many of its British counterparts for dead. The wonderful honking sax, and delightful phrasing make this the best cut on the album.

Rebel Truce are usually shambolic live, but 'The Man Inside' is passable in a dense, angry-young-man way. Also benefitting from the

studio are the Killjoys whose 'I'm Normal' is simplistic, almost bland, but with radio appeal. The Moderns close the side with 'Day Has Ended'. A classy organ sound saves them from their toneless singer and limp chorus.

The last of the North Shore bands, the Screaming Meemees open Side Two. They are possibly the best pure pop band in the country at present. They possess an uncanny ability to borrow and assimilate. 'All Dressed Up' is a Kinks riff which has been ... dressed up. Quite harmless and lots of fun. Youth For A Price offer by far the most intriguing track on the album. Quirky and spontaneous, 'Oh Yeah', is a mishmash of tunes woven together for maximum texture. I'd like to hear them do it live.

Blam Blam Blam are probably the most experienced band on the album. Their playing on 'Motivation' is tight and well-constructed and the lyrics slot in perfectly. They obviously deserve to record more. Rhythm Method's 'Mad' was one of the few bright spots on 'Homegrown'. 'Carousel' bears no resemblance to its ska sound. It revolves around a magnificent guitar line and bouncy keyboards.

The Newtones, from Christchurch, are the only non-Auckland band on the record. 'New Way' is pretty heady stuff, with some adventurous guitar, and other studio techniques, spicing a pretty ordinary song. Vivid Militia's 'Let's Go To Australia', suffers from a lack of tune which soon becomes unbearable. Not a good note to end on.

Class Of '81 has been a long while coming. I'd give it eight and a half out of twelve. But who's to say which class members will finally graduate?

Mark Phillips

Cramps



Black Uhuru
Virgin

Right now, Black Uhuru are the hottest thing in Jamaican music, and it's good news that Festival are releasing their most recent album here. Meanwhile, RTC have issued this self-titled compilation of singles originally released on Taxi and D-Roy, plus a couple of new tracks.

Originally titled *Showcase*, this album shows Black Uhuru to be worthy of all the acclaim they've received in the last two years. In fact,

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