

# RECORDS

## Split Enz Waiata Polydor

The words of a departing drummer may be invalid, but Mal Green's parting shot on *Waiata*, that Enz were taking a big step and could easily fall flat on their faces, was a real appetite-whetter. 'One Step Ahead', happily retained for the album, certainly was brave. A masterly song, it delivered its melodic gifts slyly, demanding perseverance, and playing safe only at the bass-drums bottom. The new single 'History Never Repeats' is completely different, maybe not a great single, but assuredly a very good one. It drives, taking off in the middle and then surprising you with a burst of acappella before finishing with more guitar muscle than is normally found on four Enz songs.

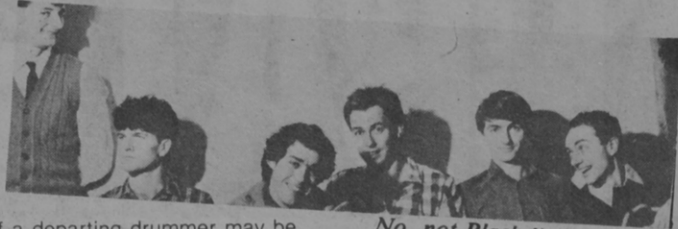
Brave? The thing Enz have in their favour, which Springsteen, to name only one, hasn't, is that they have consistently left themselves a ton of room in which to move. Consequently on *Waiata* they once again give us fresh song structures, new rhythms, all of which develop gradually but inevitably into a shape as orderly as it is loveable.

Tim Finn's 'Hard Act To Follow', written for a lady, not a brother, is a powerful, surging opener, but he does follow Neil's 'One Step Ahead' with another relentless galloping gem on track three in 'I Don't Wanna Dance'. Then Neil strikes back with a delicious love song to Iris (so desiris). Another single.

Eddie Rayner's 'Wail' is a roller coaster collection of sounds and motifs, signing off with something deep in my cinematic memory (*Midnight Cowboy?*) and then Tim rounds off a completely realised side with 'Clumsy'. Dance is again the key word.

Side Two. The new single is followed by a swirling vat of sound appropriately entitled 'Walking Thru The Ruins'. A good one (swallowed-up vocals notwithstanding) this, like much of the second side, seems likely to grow even bigger still. 'Ruins' slides neatly into Neil's again-different 'Ships', and then it's the closest we get this time to The Annual Tim Finn Ballad, the excellent haunting 'Ghost Girl'. The melodically stronger of Rayner's two instrumentals 'Albert Of India' closes the side, sensibly and effectively placed at the end.

A brave record? Well yes, but really no braver than the band was right through the 1970s. Split Enz are still moving forward, sounding healthier by the album. On the one hand, they've tossed out a drummer on the eve of releasing an album to which an assertive drummer, such as Green, seems absolutely vital. On the other, stronger, hand, the band's



No, not Black Sabbath

real musical ace-in-the-hole, Rayner, is playing an instrumentally larger role all the time. Meanwhile, the two Finns are beating down the home straight, shoulder to shoulder, hurling diamonds at each other as they run. The race is a delight to watch.

Roy Colbert

## Black Uhuru Toots And The Maytals Live Sinsemilla Island Island

Two albums here, working in roughly the same idiom, but each showing reggae at its opposite extremities; the militant and the joyous. Firmly in the former category is Michael Rose, leader of Black Uhuru (an Amharic word meaning 'sounds of freedom'). At 23, he's carved himself a formidable niche in a highly competitive sound and culture.

A native of Jamaica's Waterhouse district, Rose now lives in Brooklyn, New York, where there's only slightly less chance of copping a bullet. The dread community there is thriving, and Rose is a key figure. *Sinsemilla* is his third album. Tracks from the earlier *Love Crisis* and *Showcase* works have been assembled on a Virgin LP, along with the current trio's singles.

This latest production is a team effort, with the able help of ace sessioners Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, producing and co-writing. They've updated the traditional reggae "sound", with less emphasis on scratchy rhythm, and more on the keyboards and percussion. Again, nothing but the best, using Ansell Collins and Sticky Thompson. Sly plays syndrums extensively, giving a beat that's lighter, more up-tempo, but no less rootsy. The other two members of the trio, Puma Jones (an American woman, converted to Rastafari) and Derrick Simpson, are mere appendages, often buried in the thunderous mix of bass and percussion.

Rose has a warm, sweet voice, reminiscent of Gregory Isaacs and Johnny Clark. The songs deal with the usual Rasta preoccupations of freedom, suffering, Jah love and herb. *Sinsemilla* is melodic, fiery, innovative reggae. If it doesn't put a skank in your strut, check your pulse.



Toots, the Maytals & band.

*Toots and the Maytals Live* was recorded last October at London's Hammersmith Palais. The first copies of the album were on the streets within hours of the concert. It was a little rough in places, but quickly snapped up as a souvenir. Subsequent pressings improved greatly with a little more attention to the mix.

*Live* marks the return to form, after a lengthy layoff, of an all-time champion. Toots is nearing 50, but you wouldn't think so, listening to this. The man sparkles, crackles and shines. Ever-reliable Raleigh Gordon and Jerry Mathias are back with the boss, and some of JA's finest make up a band so good it's indecent.

Sample the celebration on 'Monkey Man' or 'Get Up, Stand Up' (not the Wailers song). 'Pressure Drop' and 'Funky Kingston' have never sounded better, while '54-46, That's My Number' shows how Toots can whip up a storm with a little James Brown-style testifying soul shouting.

A pearl of a platter, one of those live albums that makes you wish you'd been there.

Duncan Campbell

## Pylon Gyrate RTC

Hanging tags or labels on new bands is justified only by convenience, and that's slim justification. Pylon, three boys and a girl from Athens, Georgia, have been tagged as understudies to fellow Athenians, the B52s, but that's a comparison that doesn't sit too well.

The B52s have failed to climb out of the novelty bag, the bouncy bouffant packaging that is now a millstone, but these are traps that Pylon neatly swerve past on this debut. Sticking to a sparse, wiry, three-piece instrumental format, Randy Bewley (guitar), Curtis Grove (drums) and Michael Lachowski (bass) provide an ascetic foundation for Vanessa Ellison's sultriness.

It's a physical album, as you'd expect from the promise of the title and the songs are the twists of '81, spartan with no home comforts or cutesy keyboards that infiltrated the B52s' repertoire. 'Volume', 'Feast On My Heart', a



Pylon

Talking Heads' influenced 'Working is No Problem' and an over-long 'Danger' are single-minded, propelled by simple, determined guitar lines and rounded off by abrupt humorous 'throwaway' lyrics.

If nothing else *Gyrate* is a compelling dance album from a band with the discipline and dynamics to go much further. Song-wise they could improve but grab your hoola-hoops, all good lean fun.

George Kay

## Elvis Costello and the Attractions Trust F-Beat

In the past, I've found it took three months solid playing to assimilate an Elvis album. In certain cases I almost actively disliked an album initially, but forced myself to persevere. This record is different — its title is an understatement.

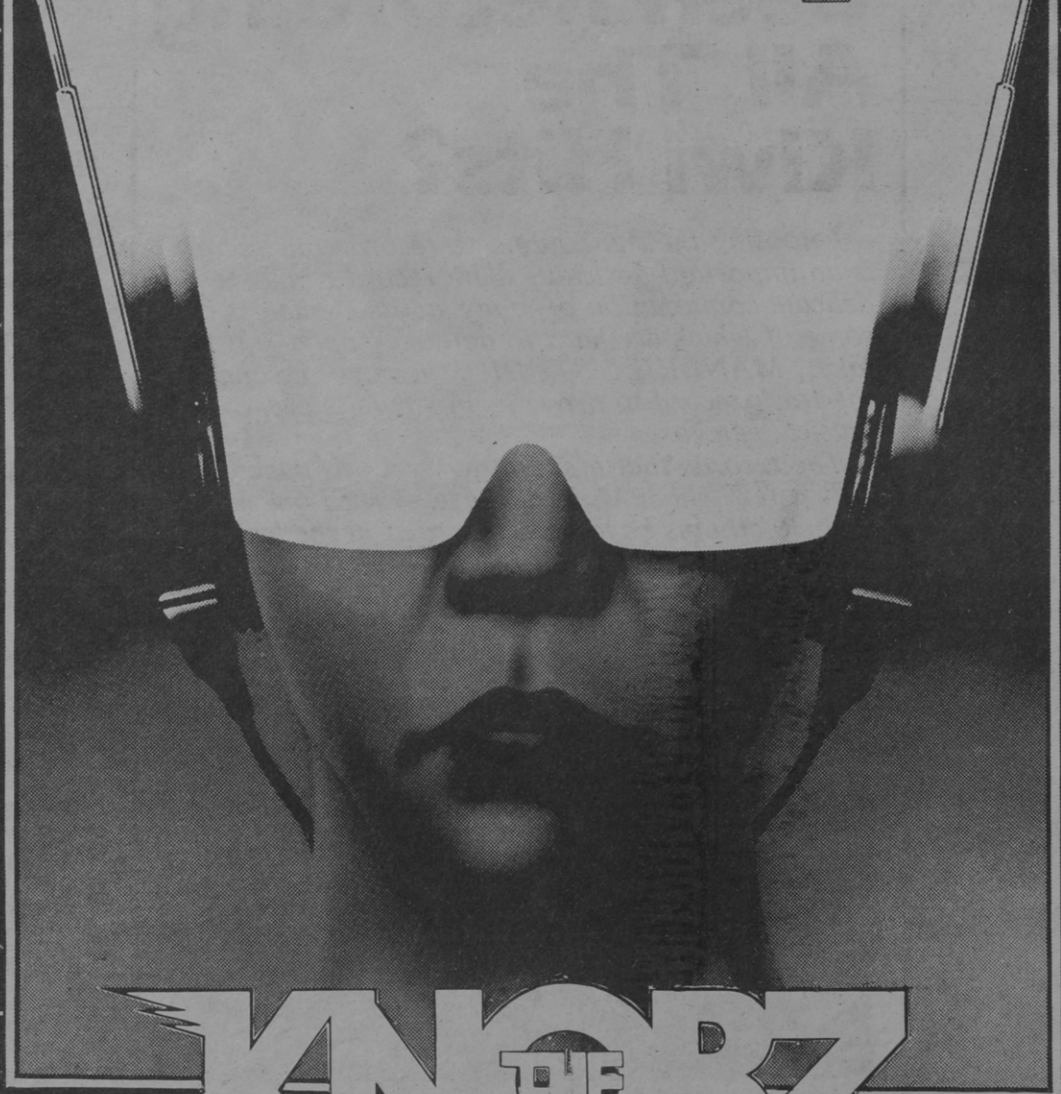
What we have here is a sparser and more romantic Costello. The album is startlingly rich in melody and texture, with some of the material being a development of the solo material recorded in Holland and released on the American *Taking Liberties* LP. Songs like 'Pretty Words', 'Watch Your Step', 'Shot With His Own Gun' and the vicious but accurate swipe at Linda Ronstadt, 'Big Sister's Clothes', rely on Elvis Costello, the voice. They use the barest of instrumental backings to excellent effect.

The other songs are sometimes a million miles removed in style, but still have that immediate feel. 'Different Ring' is the Nashville-styled successor to 'Stranger In The House'. 'Luxembourg', for me the most successful song on the record, is a late-period Spector production, based on a Bo Diddley riff which demands you adjust your volume knob.

Over all, *Trust* contains echoes of much of Costello's earlier work, but only echoes. This album, like all the others, is totally distinct from the rest of his work. I don't know if it's a step forwards, or a step sideways, or if it even matters, but as it says on the record run-off groove, 'Still the King'.

Simon Grigg

# ADDED EXPOSURE



# THE KNOBZ DEBUT ALBUM

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BUNK  
PROMOSHIN

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