

# records

## The 101ers Elgin Avenue Breakdown Andalucia

Back in 1977, the 101ers occupied a similar place in the punk scheme of things as other legendary groups like the London SS (members to GenX, Clash and Damned) and the Flowers of Romance (Sid Vicious' first). The big difference was that the 101ers gigged regularly, and released a single, 'Keys To Your Heart' on Chiswick.

The band's claim to fame was lead vocalist and guitarist Joe Strummer, and later Richard Dudanski, who was in first edition PIL. Now, through the efforts of Strummer, amongst others, we have an album documenting their short career.

The two question marks over the album are whether it sounds like the Clash, and whether it has any merit besides historical documentation. The answers are qualified yesses. The record is a mixture of studio and live-from-a-cassette material. Most of the live stuff is covers like 'Gloria' and 'No More Monkey Business' and they are rough, but not unacceptably.

But the real value of *Elgin Avenue Breakdown* is in the studio material. This sounds like much of the R'n'B flavoured stuff on *London Calling* and *Sandinista!* Especially worthy of note are the two singles, 'Keys to your Heart', a bona fide classic and 'Sweet Revenge'.

Obviously, this is one for the Clash devotees, but it could conceivably find favour with any one with a rock and roll heart.

Simon Grigg

## Cold Chisel Swingshift WEA

Some live albums work, and some don't. Some are real, and others fake it. *Swingshift* has guts.

Cold Chisel's been going over seven years now, and has literally torn Australian hearts apart by translating the national psyche into rock and roll. Kids in Sydney's western suburbs are reported to have queued for copies of this double album.

Full of rock and roll in the

finest tradition, *Swingshift* was recorded over 1980's 'Youth in Asia' tour, and much of their last album, *East*, is included.

Feature is 'Star Hotel', a riveting track penned by keyboardist Don Walker, which has turned an incident outside the same Newcastle hotel into virtual legend. Walker's songwriting excels in 'Choirgirl', and 'Four Walls', about jail — 'her majesty's hotel' he calls it. 'Breakfast at Sweethearts' from the second album starts out as chirpy reggae, but mellows out as Jim Barnes's vocals spin a simple story. It's six in the morning, toast and coffee at the cafe, and the lady who never smiles, but "just wears that mini skirt".

Powerful rockers 'My Turn to Cry', 'Cheap Wine', and 'Rising Sun', are whipped up by harmonica, and saxophone, and the masterful guitar just can't be denied.

Once again Barnes does justice to that classic Creedence 'Long as I Can See the Light', Dylan's 'Knockin' on Heaven's Door', and listen to Jesse Stone's 'Don't Let Go', which has been butchered by everybody from Manhattan Transfer to Isaac Hayes. Stand to be reconverted.

Could be what it's all about.

AnnLouise Martin

## Snakefinger Greener Postures RTC

*Greener Postures* is the first Snakefinger album to be released in New Zealand, although it is in fact his second, the other being *Chewing Hides the Sound*. While it lacks a track with the sheer stopping power of *Chewing's* 'Kill the Great Raven', it is a better-focused, more consistent set over all.

Snakefinger's assimilation of diverse sources, his exotic chop and change arrangements, and his bizarre tonal manipulations sometimes recall the more quirky sixties work of Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart. But where Zappa seemed to mock everybody and everything, Snakefinger combines his tongue-in-cheek style with material as serious and rewarding as that of any contemporary



Holly and the Italians



Jim Barnes, Cold Chisel.

rock musician.

The highlights of *Greener Postures* include the weird atonal guitar solos on 'Golden Goat' and 'The Man in the Dark Sedan', Blaine Reininger's eloquent violin on 'Don't Lie', and the contrast of the soft harmonium passages with a raunchy R'n'B riff on 'The Picture Makers vs. the Children of the Sea'.

*Postures* is co-produced and executed by Snakefinger and the Residents, and is the most accessible record yet from wacky Ralph Records.

An intriguing album.

Graham Donlon

## Various Artists Concerts For Kampuchea WEA

Nine bands, recorded live at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, 16 months ago, all proceeds to Kampuchea, come one, come all, roll up, roll up, for the new wave's Concert For Bangladesh ... The cause is admirable, the shows were probably great (the TV special was, uh, interesting), but the album?

There are some incredibly good performances here, from the Who (magnificent on all of Side One), the Clash doing a great loping 'Armageddon Time', Costello sounding superbly intense on 'The Imposter', to Davey Payne blowing up a storm in his solo with the Blockheads on 'Rhythm Stick'.

Then there are some messy-but-great works in the rock'n'roll stakes — the Pretenders just on the right side of heavy metal, while Chrissie Hynde breathes through 'The Wait', 'Precious', and an urgent 'Tattoo'd Love Boys', and Rockpile as Edmunds sings 'Crawling From The Wreckage' and Robert Plant croons Presley's 'Little Sister'.

Then comes the poop. Queen strutting through a tedious, drawn-out version of the tedious 'Now I'm Here', and Side Four: Ladies & Gentlemen, Paul McCartney and Wings, with the Rockestra. The best part of this farce on TV was Pete Townshend refusing to don a silver suit. The songs include 'Got To Get You Into My Life', 'Lucille', 'Let It Be', and the 'Rockestra

Theme'. It all reminds me of ELO live. Of the rest, well, there's only the Specials' versions of Toots' 'Monkey Man', which sounds like they had fun doing it.

David McLean

## Sir Douglas Quintet Border Wave Chrysalis

*Border Wave* is Doug Sahm's first album for years under the Sir Douglas Quintet moniker. I don't have the liner notes with me, but the current line-up includes at least drummer John Perez and the essential Farfisa organ of Augie Meyer, so the band retains much of the Quintet's signature Tex-Mex sound, which when it's right is as right as rain and just as natural. Sir Doug's 1969 album *Mendocino* is one of my all-time desert island discs, but it was difficult to imagine this new venture measuring up to that album's seemingly off-handed magic.

Sure enough, I was disappointed first time through. The material isn't so hot overall despite an interesting choice of covers from the Kinks and 13th Floor Elevators. On some tracks, the clean production is at the expense of the live jangling sound characteristic of the style.

But I'm warming to the record — being a fan I try harder — and Side One in particular is sounding better each time. As always, Doug Sahm's vocals can lift otherwise uninspired songs well clear of mediocrity, and beneath the surface sheen of *Border Wave* can still be felt the honesty and easy action that is the soul of the Sir Douglas Quintet.

Terence Hogan

## Tactics My Houdini Green The Models Alphabravocharliefdelta Mushroom

These two debut albums represent the two poles in Australian music.

On one hand, Tactics have produced a magnificently stark and adventurous album that bodes well for the band. The material is strong (especially 'Frozen Park', 'New York Reel' and 'Second Language') and well produced. It provides a perfect vehicle for the extraordinary voice of songwriter David Studdert. It is a little like that of Family's Roger Chapman, but projected from deeper in the throat. Along with Mental As Anything's, and the excellent Birthday Party albums this is one recent Australian LP which isn't just the sum of its influences.

On the other hand, it is to be hoped that the recent addition of ex-Swinger Buster Stiggs and his songwriting will add something to the very dull Models. The band has something of a live reputation, but their debut is uniformly drab and derivative, culminating in 'Controllable Urge', with its sub-Devo title and riff. There is a uniform lack of good ideas, and a shoddy production that obliterates anything that may have been there at the start.

It's albums like this that give Aussie rock a bad name, but fortunately, they have bands like Tactics to forcibly drag that reputation up to enviable heights.

Simon Grigg

## Holly & The Italians The Right To Be Italian Virgin

Mock Italians, most of them, produced by Richard Gottehrer and helped most mentionably by Talking Head Jerry Harrison, Holly Vincent and her band seem reluctant to commit themselves totally to cleaned up Ramones' music, pinhead guitar moves and all. When they do, it's as good as anything currently being thrown at us by the American new wave; (try 'I Wanna Go Home', 'Baby Gets It All', 'Youth Coup' and 'Just Young', all on Side One). The second side evaporates like the bubblegum this album essentially is, the nadir coming on 'Means To A Den' when Gottehrer tries to rescue a weak song with phasing (nouveau, nouveau) in the bridge.

Holly writes the songs, and plays her guitar, if we believe the gross cover, in white gloves. She sings somewhere between Chrissie Hynde and pre-silicone chip Debbie Harry (you didn't know Debbie Harry had been replaced by a silicone chip?).

And if that's her slashing those chords back on Side One, then she deserves at least some of our attention.

Play it real loud. The peaks are as futureless as they're fun.

Roy Colbert

## Rascals In Retrospect Atlantic

More Glenn Baker-compiled and annotated excellence, this 20 track collection omitting absolutely nothing from the 1966-69 career of the (Young) Rascals. The group's considerable initial impact as a singles band is underlined by the inclusion here of the B sides of their first four singles. All four thoroughly deserve inclusion, 'Love Is A Beautiful Thing' actually bettering its A side 'You Better Run', and 'Slow Down' ranking as the band's finest rock'n'roll hour. A word too on the pair of Sawyer-Burton songs 'I Ain't Gonna Eat My Heart Out Anymore' and 'Baby Let's Wait'. Retrospectively these two were atypical, but 'Heart' especially is magnificent (get the La De Das' version also if you can find it).

Good as the early stuff was, the Rascals will be remembered most for their subsequent perfecting of white soul on such 60s landmarks as 'Groovin'' and 'People Gotta Be Free'. Felix Cavaliere was the ideal singer, and Cavaliere-Brigati the ideal writing team (the pair reconvened briefly on Cavaliere's third solo album to produce one of the very finest songs of 1980 in 'Love Is The First Day Of Spring').

Baker closes the compilation off at 1969's 'Carry Me Back', which like the under-rated hit before it 'See' was written by Cavaliere without Brigati's help. The Rascals made records through until 1972, but Cavaliere's increasing fascination with things more serious and less Rascals-like made those closing years commercially unproductive. Cavaliere's taste and talent however was obvious, and it wasn't a surprise when his second solo album *Destiny* bowled critics over everywhere. One of the 1970's true forgotten classics.

Roy Colbert

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