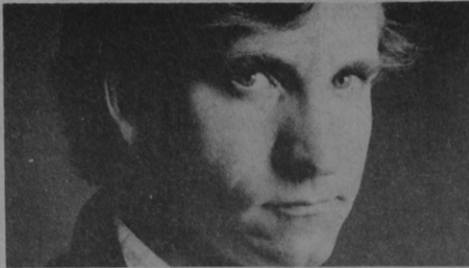


Gang Of Four

Sandy Parلمان for *Give 'Em Enough Rope*. An uncertain period.

1979 was *London Calling* year, and as an indication of their newly-found confidence we have 'Pressure Drop', reggae with life and vitality, two features of the afore mentioned album.

Finally, 1980. It's reggae all the way, except for an aimless version of 'Time is Tight'. Why bother? 'Armageddon Time' and dubs 'Justice Tonight/Kick It Over', all from the 12" 'London Calling' single, are just fine, but 'Bankrobber' still sounds lame to these ears and



Joe Walsh

was a foretaste to the disasters of *Sandinista*.

So there you have it, an aural tour of the ups and downs of the Clash — or mostly commendable album of selected segments with most of the songs being previously unavailable here. Compulsory fare for Clash fans.

George Kay

Eyeless In Gaza Photographs as Memories RTC

First listening, early afternoon. Uh, yeah, lots of synthesisers, mostly predictable, nothing new. Oh well, at least

there's quite good rhythm guitar on most tracks — but those vocals. Sort of like Andy Partridge after half a bottle of tequila, very earnest and mannered, submerging the lyrics in a glutinous sea of expressionism (that may not mean much, but it looks good). It does sound like two guys in a studio, which it is, so that's OK. Pretentious, but reasonably interesting instrumentally.

Second listening, after midnight (on headphones). Sounds quite appealing, I must be getting used to the vocals which aren't nearly as grating as at first. Concentrating on the

instrumental sounds reveals some excellent music. Still can't hear the lyrics, but it sounds as though they'd be a little too arty for my taste anyway. Really like about six tracks out of thirteen, and only one is a total waste of time. Unfortunately, it's the longest.

Third listening, in the bath (on ancient mono cassette deck), the acid test. Will it survive low fidelity treatment? Yes, it even sounds like Becker and Bates might possess a sense of humour. It is a bit pretentious, but putting a record out at all is a pretentious act. I like it. Not great, but good.

Fourth thoughts, after reading NME review. Damn. I got it wrong.

Chris Knox

Gang of Four Solid Gold EMI

In establishing the sound of the last two or three years, the Gang of Four's 'Damaged Goods' EP and to a lesser extent their first album *Entertainment* have been crucial. Hard, bare and direct, they've championed the antithesis of breakfast music with their groundbreaking attitudes of literate social concern and anti-hypocrisy.

On *Solid Gold*, they continue on their morally concerned way but musically they're running dry. They've thickened their songs into what they've described as "a more danceable record", a move no doubt prompted by last year's American tour. And this is a step backwards, especially on the turgid, forgettable funk of 'If I Could Keep It For Myself' and 'In the Ditch'. Other disappointments arrive in the form of inescapably weak songs such as 'Cheeseburger', 'Outside the Trains Don't Run On Time' and 'The Republic'. But there are three tracks bearing good news.

'Paralysed', a song about unemployment, opens the album with high promise as it uses space and Gill's guitar technique to best advantage. 'What We All Want' is funk that works mainly because it is tied to a tune that is more than serviceable, and, finally 'He'd Send In the Army', tough, choppy and abrasive — qualities rare on *Solid Gold*.

With damn near two years between albums, the Gang of Four should have been capable of coming up with something a little more imaginative than *Solid Gold*. It would have made an excellent EP but has to settle with being a mediocre album, and from a band the calibre of the Gang of Four that's far from acceptable.

George Kay

Joe Walsh There Goes The Neighbourhood Asylum

I've been a fan of Joe's ever since his marvellous work of '73-'74 and still think *So What* contains some of the most original and endearing heavy rock ever.

Since then, however, the boy's hardly been prolific; this is only his second album of new material in seven years. Perhaps the poor sod gets exhausted trying to inspire limping Eagles to fly. Occasionally one worries about the reverse effect — that, instead, Joe might be succumbing to the general torpor of the eyrie.

But *Seriously Folks*, his '78 album, largely checked those fears, particularly its 'Life's Been Good', Joe's droll reflection on his own life in the fast lane. He also wrote a movie score for *The Warriors*. In fact, I was hoping he might even slip the terrific 'In the City' onto this new album to counteract that dreary Eagles' version. No such luck.

Actually, *There Goes the Neighbourhood* presents a bit of a problem. If I wasn't such a fan I'd really find much of it rather boring. Joe's forte has always been the slow and

heavy but often Side One is pretty ponderous. However, this one seems to get better as it progresses. Side Two picks up considerably, with both stronger material and better arrangements. There's even a couple of (for Joe) fairly sprightly numbers.

I'm still a fan and, as such, grateful for the album but I'm not about to rush around pushing it onto non-believers.

Peter Thomson

Spandau Ballet Journeys to Glory Chrysalis

London has always been a place for trends, but few have been as visually impressive as the current futurist chic. Clubs such as Blitz and Studio 21 have a clientele decked out with outrageous clothes, painted faces and brightly-coloured hair. The music is the synthesiser dance, and the darlings of the set are Spandau Ballet.

The Spandaus are the creation of guitarist/synthesiser player, Gary Kemp. Dressed to keep one step ahead of their followers they come on like highland-dancing gauchos.

Their debut is produced by expatriot New Zealander, Richard James Burgess. All the songs are written by Gary Kemp, and they reach their peak on the funk-based singles, 'To Cut A Long Story Short' and 'Freeze'. Both are instantly accessible dance tunes, with some fine bass from Gary's brother Martin. Unfortunately, the rest of the album just trails off.

The instrumental, 'Age of Blows' could have been lifted from the last Ultravox album, while 'Mandolin' and 'Toys' highlight the shortcomings of Kemp's attempted *savoir faire*. 'Reformation' and 'Confused' are both passable synpop, marred by Tony Hadley's affected vocals.

Spandau Ballet aren't the first to show that two strong singles don't make an album.

Mark Phillips

Shakin' Pyramids Skin 'Em Up Virgin

Amongst other things 1981 could be the Year of the Quiff. The Stray Cats have kept rockabilly as a fashionable alternative just when Major Matchbox et al had almost buried it. Now Scots' band the Shakin' Pyramids, fresh from Glasgow's independent Cuba Libre label, look like having the savvy and spirit to keep the British rockabilly revival on its feet.

Vocally, the Pyramids leave the Cats for dead. Out front is lead singer Davie Duncan, who also blows harp and is backed up by the acoustic fire of James Creighton and 'Railroad' Ken. Sixty per cent of their material is old stuff, but they shake and slap it with more gusto than most electric bands can muster.

It's their own songs that really provide the album's highlights. 'Let's Go', short but oh so sweet, has the belt and infectiousness of the Ramones gone acoustic. 'Take A Trip' and 'Hellbent on Rockin' are trad rockabilly in style (they call it reefer-billy) and 'Sunset of My Tears', a ballad, cools things down just a little.

Rockabilly is a trapped idiom, dead-end music, but the Pyramids are a lotta fun. All they've got to remember next time out is to include more of their own material. Then they're really talkin'.

George Kay

Marvin Gaye In Our Lifetime EMI

With the other two perennial giants of Motown — Stevie and Smokey — enjoying renewed vitality it's about time Marvin Gaye made his move. *In Our Lifetime* is certainly Gaye's strongest album for many years, but it recalls his great early 70's work as much as it represents any new departure.

From the cover art to the



Shakin' Pyramids

equally unsuited lyrics, Gaye is developing the spiritual ideas that first concerned him on 1971's classic *What's Going On*. But other lyrics (and the back cover photo) recall the suave sex-crusader of 1973's *Let's Get It On*.

If *In Our Lifetime* lacks the high points of these monumental predecessors, it does, however, share their overall consistency. Gaye proves that he can still write *whole* albums. The tracks segue smoothly, giving each side a strong sense of unity.

Naturally enough the music bears many current hallmarks — the disco beat of 'Love Party', the busy post-Pastorius bass-playing in 'Funk Me' — but it nonetheless retains Gaye's supple, fluid feeling of old.

I suspect *In Our Lifetime* is unlikely to win over new generations of fans for Gaye. Possibly some people will dismiss it as essentially dated. Is Gaye really stuck in a rut or rather maintaining his groove? I guess it all depends on your predisposition. Me? I like it fine.

Peter Thomson

B R I E F S

Gen X Kiss Me Deadly (Chrysalis)

Gen X have really failed to capitalise on their tidy, if innocuous, debut of three years back. Billy Idol always alienated the serious-minded with his photogenic punkness and the band have been struggling to find anything approaching direction or impetus. They're now defunct, and on "Kiss Me Deadly", their finale, the above aimlessness is apparent, but on one or two songs, namely 'Dancing With Myself' and 'Revenge', they've wisely played within their neat, often dynamic capabilities.

JK Jimi Hendrix Nine to the Universe (Polydor)

Since Jimi Hendrix died, so many inadequate and/or unfinished recordings have been pumped on to the market it's hard to believe anything of genuine interest can remain. But this album of jam sessions from 1969 is one of the few posthumous recordings to do credit to Hendrix's memory. It shows Hendrix moving towards jazz, a fiery, rhythmic jazz born of his R&B roots. Jamming can be (for the listener, at any rate) self-indulgent and boring. Not so here. The sheer vitality of the music can only fuel speculation as to the sounds Hendrix might have made had he lived.

KW Vapors Magnets (Liberty)

The British press was nearly as unkind to the Vapors' 'Spiders' single as it was to 'I Got You', and we all know what happened to 'I Got You'. 'Spiders', gimmicky vocal and all, helps prop up the second Vapors' album along with the bouncy 'Jimmie Jones', a song of almost Undertones' proportions. But after these opening two, the band's idea of pop gets a bit piffy, and when the salvage attempt comes at the end of Side Two — the title track — it's too late.

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