



Eric Clapton
Another Ticket
RSC
B. B. King
There Must Be a Better
World Somewhere
MCA

Tom Dowd produced Eric Clapton's two best studio albums, *Layla* and *461 Ocean Boulevard*. He is back at the board for Clapton's latest, *Another Ticket*, a brilliant testimony to Eric's revived musical fortunes.

The wonderful band supporting Clapton on the superb live album *Just One Night* performs just as well under studio conditions. The lethargy that crippled Clapton's previous, American band is nowhere in evidence.

The line-up of Albert Lee (guitar), Chris Stainton (keyboards), Henry Spinetti (drums) and Dave Markee (bass) has been reinforced by ex-Procull Harum Gary Brooker on keyboards. Everyone gets a chance to show their paces, but the emphasis is where it belongs — on Clapton's well-worn voice and ever-eloquent guitar.

In essence, the album is not dissimilar from other recent studio efforts. There is a mixture of country, ballads and blues, but at every turn the slackness of *Slowhand* and *Backless* is gone.

Listen to Clapton tear things up on 'Muddy Waters' 'Blow Wind Blow' or his own 'I Can't Stand It' (shades of Stevie Winwood in the Spencer Davis days) or the furious rave-up that closes the album on 'Rita Mae'. This time it's for real.

That other old guitar wizard B. B. King also turns in a performance to blow the dust

off your speakers. King has tried some adventurous (sometimes disastrous) collaborations in the past. He has worked with rockers, jazzers and Philly soft-soul merchants. His work with the Crusaders was especially fine. He has now teamed with Dr John and Doc Pomus for an album that marks a new peak in King's long career.

The album's general feel was blueprinted in Dr John's *City Lights* and *Tango Palace* albums — a sort of slow-motion funk, relaxed and rolling, a near-drone that is utterly infectious.

Backing up the basic group of B. B. King, Dr John (keyboards), Pretty Purdie (drums), Wilbur Bascomb (bass) and Hugh McCracken (rhythm guitar) is a horn section led by Hank Crawford (alto sax) and David "Fathead" Newman (tenor). Crawford and Newman get plenty of solo space and they lay down some lovely lines.

B. B., too, is in fine form. His singing and guitar are spot-on.

B. B. King and Dr John — an inspired collaboration.

Ken Williams

B R I E F S

Sector 27

Sector 27 (Mercury)

Poor old Tom Robinson, one of the few really committed politics-in-rock activists who made his point when people were willing to listen back in '77, but is now struggling with old musical ideas and a dwindling audience who've heard it all before.

His new band, Sector 27 just pick up from where Kustow and Co left off — polished and

energetic, the ideal vehicle for pushing Robinson's concerned vignettes. Workmanlike he is, competent even, but as a songwriter he has rarely risen above intelligent story-telling and sloganeering, and *Sector 27* is no different.

Robinson has had his fifteen minutes in rock, but he's probably worth more on the platform. And that's where he belongs.

GK

Slow Children (Ensign)
Part-produced by Jules Shear of the surprisingly highly-thought-of Jules and the Polar Bears, Slow Children appear to be trying for a piece of Motels/Pretenders action on their debut. Urgent, jerky and precise, Slow Children are at times artily indifferent towards AM radio rules, but 'Staring At The Ceiling', 'She's Like America' and the single 'Talk About Horses' all suggest there could well be room at the inn. Arresting cover.

RC

Ruts DC
Animal Now (Virgin)
With the death of Malcolm Owen last year, a vocalist of abrasive character if nothing else, the Ruts lost the crucial factor in their particular identity. New musician/vocalist Segs is competently nondescript, and he fits in well with the band's tight, disciplined song structures but without Owen they've lost their distinctive edge. 'Dangerous Minds', 'No Time To Kill' and 'Mirror Smashed' are durable and workmanlike and the dub reggae weight of 'Fools' is well-intentioned if a little bland. Satisfactory but not satisfying, the Ruts are still angry but don't sound it.

GK

Quincy Jones,
The Dude (A&M)

There's a cliché that albums by producers are smooth, well-produced but empty affairs. And yes the latest from Quincy Jones, the master producer of Michael Jackson and George Benson, is smooth and well-produced but it's also a largely enjoyable confection. When the material relies on the singer to pull it through, the hollowness of these professionals just doesn't convince. But when the groove's hot enough as it is on about half of this album, there's no problem.

AD



Flowers, Mainstreet. Trudy Green, Neighbours.

L I V E

Flowers

Mainstreet, July 1

These Ockers are onto something. Time was when people in these parts knew or cared little about what was happening across the ditch. But Oz rock, like our homegrown product, has had a renaissance in recent years, and the exchange of talent between the two countries has been healthy.

Cold Chisel had packed Mainstreet two nights running the week before, and Flowers just about managed the same at their one-night Auckland stand, part of a quick quartet of NZ gigs.

Iva Davies is a neat little showman, his coldly delicate features almost Numanesque, but with far more expression, especially when wringing every ounce of anguish from 'Ice-house'. He also did one of the best Lennon salutes I've seen, a tortured, majestic rendition of 'Cold Turkey'.

Mainstreet turned into a sauna as Flowers tore through 'Fatman', 'Sister' and 'Walls', hit an early peak with 'Can't



Help Myself', and encored with 'We Can Get Together'.

Heavy synthesised pop is in danger of being done to death, but Flowers steer clear of the pitfalls, and have better songs than most of their peers.

Duncan Campbell

Neighbours

Windsor Castle, July 4

You've got the wiry Sam Ford on guitar and vocals, Trudy Green on vocals, Rick Bryant on vocals and saxophone, Andrew Clouston (ex-Rodents) on saxophone, Ken James on guitar, on bass Poss Cameron, and Paul Kunac on drums.

The Windsors, though not packed to the hilt, is blessed with a somewhat serious, but attentive crowd. The first set, for the most part, is confined to a selection of rocky/calypso tunes written by Sam and Rick, plus covers 'King Creole' and 'Cry Tuff'. It is extremely loud.

We're looking at some of the best musicians around town, they could play anything well, but for a start, it lacks kick. The excitement only emerges in the second bracket, where there are some great moments.

Sam Ford calls a break, announcing the Neighbours will return to kick the shit out of it. Certainly, there is an improvement, despite sound problems. Trudy Green, when she takes the main spot gives the words what she's got, and inevitably gives the band a colour, and verve, as she sashays round the stage, tambourine in hand.

One of the night's highlights is 'Jump Back Baby', where Ken

James plays sax in favour of his guitar. And Rick Bryant's just got rhythm coming out of his pores. When he takes the mike in hand he's a classic showman.

The Neighbours warmed up, and became less rigid in their choice of material as the evening progressed — Otis Redding, a Motown medley, and finally their forthcoming single 'Love is Never Cruel'.

The band's been together about two months. They're good, but somehow they still seem to be searching for the right combination.

AnnLouise Martin

Herbs

Gluepot, June 25

Unless it's reasonably full, I don't regard the Gluepot as the ideal venue to see any band, let alone one fighting against a lousy PA as Herbs had on this particular Wednesday night. This problem tended to compound all the band's shortcomings. They couldn't get enough volume (and reggae should be very loud) and the overall fuzzy effect that occurred when more than one person sang made them a little cock-tailish in the early part of the evening. But in spite of the problems, they still managed to pull it off.


The band has improved vastly in the last few months with new bass player Phil Toms, and a fast-improving drummer, Fred Faleauto, providing one of the tightest rhythm sections I've seen recently.

The material is about two thirds non-original, ranging from a dull Heptones' styled 'I Shall Be Released' to an inspiring '96 degrees in the Shade'. But it's the originals that really stand out, with a flavour that's one step beyond pure JA reggae, with an obvious indigenous feel. It's a pity they don't play more of their own material as they seem to put a lot more into that than they do some of the covers.

Given time, and a decent sound system, Herbs could develop into something special, but they should make the decision right now whether to play more of their own songs, or to continue to do covers.

Simon Grigg





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