

# RECORDS

**Undertones**  
**Positive Touch**  
EMI

Let's rave. Let's talk about the Undertones whose first album simply outranked allcomers with its Ramones' fuelled energy, great tunes, Irish innocence, romance and Feargal Sharkey. And whose second album never quite made the grade coz they tried to progress, but O'Neill's love songs were too fey and insipid and their rock'n'roll kisses too mechanical. It had great moments, especially on the second side, but you had to skip tracks.

So now, new label (from Sire to EMI) and a new sound, that's *Positive Touch* and the Undertones have grown up which means they've shed once and for all the Ramones' break-neck pop structures (just as well, look what's happened to Joey and co.) and young O'Neill is writing truly wonderful love songs backed by a band who've lately re-listened to the Beatles' and the mid-sixties' guitar sound.

Sharkey, as always, is brilliant especially in his delivery of aching pop ballads the likes of 'Julie Ocean', 'Sigh and Explode' and 'Forever Paradise'. But one of the main achievements of *Positive Touch* is that the Undertones have reached a middle pace, a tempo and an attitude that has enabled them to move away from the naive simplicity of much of their earlier repertoire. 'Life's Too Easy', 'His Goodlooking Girlfriend', 'I Don't Know' and the



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The Undertones

superb single (surely the year's best so far) 'It's Going To Happen' show their ability at treating a song as a song and not just a teenage statement. Horn men Neill King and Dick Blewett also add a colour that Undertones' music was made for and this is a direction they can dive into in the future.

All this and Sharkey and the boys still come on like boys next door. They still look like the Muppets' idea of pop punks, but in *Positive Touch* they've made an album that puts them beyond even the achievements of the Buzzcocks and the later Ramones. *Positive Touch* is the album they've promised. Hold them to it.

George Kay

**Echo And The Bunnymen**  
**Heaven Up Here**  
Korova

With *Crocodies*, Echo and the Bunnymen made a promise of better things to come, and this is it.

The opening cut is fittingly titled 'Show of Strength', a powerful tour-de-force in the 'Rescue' mould. Thunderous bass drum gives way to lead guitar and then McCulloch's vocals.

*Heaven Up There* has the

consistency that their debut lacked. Every track screams excellence. Peter de Freitas drums as if he had six arms, and Will Sergeant's guitar is pure joy. However, it is ultimately McCulloch who carries the songs from good to superb. The single, 'A Promise', closes Side One, and leaves you scrambling to turn the record over.

The title track opens the second side. It is an epic of 'Villiers Terrace' proportions. A sudden finish, and it's into 'The Disease', wistful and eerie. It sets the mood for 'All My Colours' and 'Turquoise Days'. Tribal drums and yet another chanting chorus (you can tell these guys are Liverpool supporters!) make 'All I Want' rousing stuff.

If you don't already own this album, buy it. It's the best thing you'll hear all year, and that's a promise.

Mark Phillips

**Gary U.S. Bonds**  
**Dedication**  
EMI

Veteran rocker T.S. Eliot used to talk about the interplay between a tradition and individual talent. Bruce Springsteen has heaps of both. In concert,



Joe Ely

he often acknowledges his roots with versions of classics by Mitch Ryder and Gary U.S. Bonds. Now he's gone one better and returned Bonds to the charts after an absence of 20 years.

And what a return! Backed by the wondrous E Street Band, Bonds blazes his way through a set that brings joy to the heart. The rich roar of his voice has such youthful vitality that one forgets this man's in his 40's. (It's obvious where Bruce learned his gritty delivery when you hear the two of them swap vocals on 'Jole Blon'.)

Springsteen contributed three new songs here which are well up to *The River* standard. (Try, say, the latter's 'Sherry Darling' with this album's title track back to back.) But there are others equally as fine and if the album sometimes seems to have a 'period' feel, that just means it sounds timeless, never dated.

Its only shortcomings lie with a couple of the covers. The Beatles' 'It's Only Love' is straightforward and solid but Jackson Browne's 'The Pretender' becomes overwrought. The real mistake is Dylan's 'From A Buick 6' which, completely missing the humour, is simply

pedestrian.

On the other hand, however, there are some magnificent achievements. The marvellous and metaphoric 'Daddy's Come Home' by E Streeter Steve Van Zandt combines a melody, lyric, arrangement and vocal into as soulful a ballad as I'll ever want to hear.

Springsteen once described Gary Bonds' singing as 'eternal'. On at least three quarters of this album he's enabled Bonds to prove him absolutely right.

Peter Thomson

**Peter Green**  
**Whatcha Gonna Do?**  
PVK

As Fleetwood Mac hit their first peak just over 10 years ago, founding member Peter Green left abruptly. Since then, personal problems have kept him away from professional music.

Two years ago he came up with *In the Skies*, a pleasant, although rather tentative album. Green, one of the great melodic guitarists, largely confined himself to playing rhythm and the promise outweighed the fulfilment.

A second album, *Little Dreamer*, was more confident. Green was playing lead again and he had a solid little band. The best songs, could stand with the imaginative blues variations he had created with Fleetwood Mac.

*Whatcha Gonna Do?* is as good, better, than anything he has done before.

The crooning, insinuating voice has a wider emotional range, the guitar is as tasteful as ever.

Around him, Green has assembled a tight little group, the only one of whom is any sort of 'name' is former Fairport Convention drummer Dave Mattacks. Worthy of mention is sax-player Jeff Daly. They lay down rubber-band rhythms that stretch and bend and just keep pushing without ever forcing the issue — listen to the reggae-ish 'Give Me Back My Freedom' or the

hypnotising 'Last Train to San Antone'.

In his Fleetwood Mac days, Peter Green's forte was understatement. *Whatcha Gonna Do?* has none of the White blues bands' excesses to shatter the mood of tender-tough romanticism. On atmosphere alone, it's superb.

Does this sound ecstatic? I hope so. This is a quite wonderful record.

Ken Williams

**Joe Ely**  
**Musta Notta Gotta Lotta**  
MCA

Joe Ely, a native of Amarillo, Texas, in the deep heart of America's southland, is breathing new life into America's most vital and under-rated genre, country music.

Country music? Yeah, I know, but hold on, pardner, country music doesn't have to be Waylon and Leon doing a double act, or Dolly Parton's tits. No, country music used to be Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams, and still is Delbert McClinton and Joe Ely.

*Musta Notta Gotta Lotta* (great title) is Joe Ely's 4th album for MCA, as far as I'm aware, his first in NZ, and, while it has it's faults, is definitely the best country LP I've heard in a long time. It's got drive, power, wit, world-weary wisdom, great playing, great songs, etc.

The title track shows that Jerry Lee, if he doesn't recover from his recent illness, has left a very real legacy in this Ely fellow, and sax player Smokey Joe Miller plays some great lines off Ely's vocal on the Jimmie Gilmore ballad, 'Dallas'. The rockers keep coming with Ely's 'Hold On' and 'I Keep Gettin' Paid The Same', partner Butch Hancock's 'Road Hawg', Shorty Long's 'Rock Me My Baby', and Roy Brown's erst-while 'Good Rockin' Tonight'.

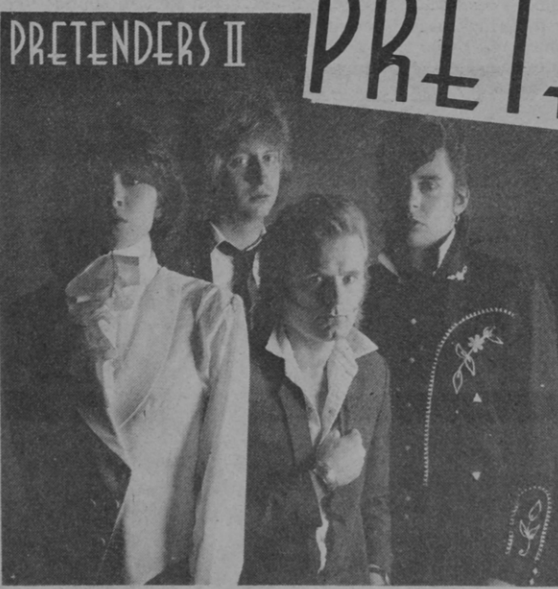
In all, a good record, some tracks don't quite work, but then, what's without its faults these days?

Dave McLean

**THE SOUND**  
**JEOPARDY**



THE SOUND  
JEOPARDY



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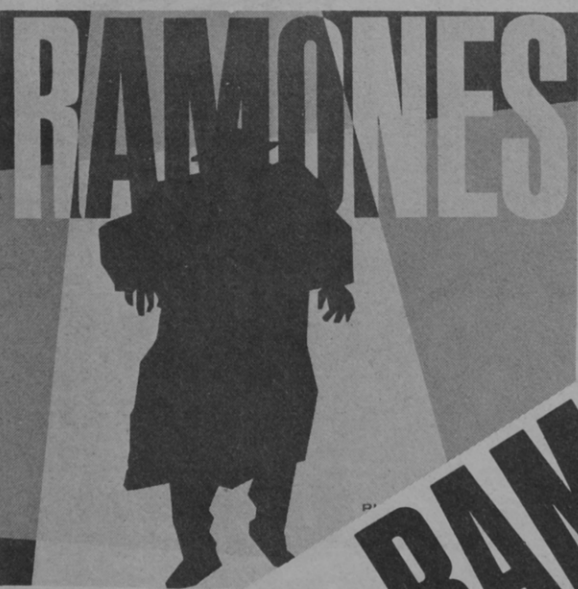
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