



The Cuban Heels
Work Our Way To Heaven
Virgin

Ali MacKenzie is a busy man. At the beginning of the year he formed the Cuba Libre label in a Glasgow tenement and later produced the Shakin' Pyramids' album. He's also drummer for the Cuban Heels, four Glaswegians who've been around for a couple of years, and it was their constant rejection by big record companies that prompted MacKenzie to set up Cuba Libre. This is the label's second album.

The Heels are really another post-Bowie Scottish renaissance band, less dramatic than the Skids, less enigmatic than Simple Minds and more conventionally accessible than the Associates. Suffering under three producers (John Leckie, Nick Launay and Steve Hillage) the album struggles for continuity. Their songs are succinct, spritely and often deal cynically with social class divisions, the great British heritage. 'Liberty Hall', 'Move Up A Grade', 'Homes For Heroes',

The Old School Song' and their first single 'Walk On Water' bear grudges and hit hard musically and lyrically. But elsewhere the Heels are labouring to rise above a hard-edged competence. The ideas are ordinary and on the only ballad present, 'Coming Up For Air', vocalist John Milarky and the string arrangement go well over the top.

Still, on a debut a lot can be forgiven and the Heels are a cut above the eighties' humdrum. And their intentions are noble. **George Kay**

Ultravox
Rage In Eden
Chrysalis

Last year's successful *Vienna* stamped the new Ultravox as the band most likely to succeed in the electronic music stakes. They achieved accessibility by a combination of strong vocals with powerful riffing on a string of serene melodies with the appropriate mix of electronics and rock.

On *Rage in Eden*, the lessons of *Vienna* have been largely forgotten in overblown concepts.



Cuban Heels **Techtones**

The downgrading of vocals, and the veritable flood of epic choruses create a stop-start effect and only rarely does the melodic power that so distinguished *Vienna* come to the fore.

Side One contains the frenetic 'We Stand Alone', with its catchy chorus line. 'The Voice' has a fine instrumental start, but weak lyrics and 'I Remember' gives the side a soaring finish. Side Two is saved only by the claustrophobic 'Your Name' with its reverberating drums and swirling vocals.

If you haven't bought *Vienna*, invest your bucks there. *Rage In Eden* may have enough to satisfy the converted, but the lasting impression is that Ultravox are standing on a precipice. Quasimodo, ring the alarm bells. **David Perkins**

Madness
7
Stiff

Third albums are very important. The first two are the tried and proven stage favourites, while the third is often material written specifically for the album, or even in the studio. I'm

glad to see that Madness have pulled it off, though at the same time, they seem to have painted themselves into a corner.

The problem is that while 7 is a very much above-average pop album, it differs little in form or direction to its immediate predecessor. *Absolutely* managed to move away from the fading ska fad, but this album makes no similar moves ahead.

That said, I like 7 immensely. Madness' knack of combining great pop with a kind of vaudevilian charm remains unchanged. In that way, it follows the great Stiff tradition established by Ian Dury and Wreckless Eric.

Every track is a potential single, and two already have been, including the great 'Grey Day' (previewed at the Auckland concert).

I always have been a sucker for pure and well-crafted trashy pop music, and to my ears this is trash of the first order. **Simon Grigg**

The Passions
Thirty Thousand Feet Over China
Polydor

The Passions originally started out three years ago as another Chris Parry (Fiction) bid to take over the world. Their first single, 'The Hunted', was novel rock-reggae; twee and insubstantial it didn't exactly encourage inspection of their first album.

Thirty Thousand Feet Over China has been preceded by the single 'I'm In Love With A German Film Star', a mouthful of palatable Curesque candyfloss, light as air and about as potent - it opens the new album and provides an insight into the band's dilemma.

The Passions make superficially attractive music, seductive and enticing ('Someone Special' and 'Alice's Song') with frequent attempts at inner strength ('The Swimmer', 'Small Stones' and 'Bachelor Girls') that don't quite have the required kick. Vocalist Barbara Gogan is vague, wistful and anonymous ('Alice's Song'), she's too controlled and unruffled. Impassionate. Guitarist Clive Timperley carries the songs with aplomb and precision, he doesn't panic or

become too emotional. A pity.

The band live outside their music so the emotional investment, if it's there, is subordinate to a controlled modern equity.

This is the new MOR. Easy listening, easily forgotten. **George Kay**

Techtones
T.T.23
Ripper

The idea was fine. Four gents with previous experience decided to learn from past experience and play pop at a time that seemed conducive to a Techtones' takeover. But nothing happened. What went wrong?

Their first and last album, T.T.23 supplies a few answers. Justifiably disappointed with the lame single, 'State of Mind' and desiring to stay clear of further studio/record company pressures, the band decided to record their album using a Teac four-track in their practice rooms for much of the album and by recording the final five tracks live. The results have all the hallmarks of DIY enthusiasm, and all the defects.

The songs, especially the practice room tapes, often rise above the amateurish production. T.T.23, the classy 'Magazine' and the exuberance of 'On Your Mind' and 'Johnny' are proof enough of the Techtones' craftsmanship. The live-in-the-pub fare is muffled but the weepy melodrama of 'Shed A Tear' and the clout of 'Reply' and the 'Same Old Game' are almost salvaged.

So the album confirms their talents as writers but it also reveals their shambolic idealism especially when you consider the work that went into recording T.T.23. It has a scrappy last-ditch feel to it which doesn't do their songs justice, but for all that it's good to have their material committed to some sort of posterity. **George Kay**

Colin Newman
Provisionally Entitled the Singing Fish
4AD

The Wire albums were good, especially the quiet songs on *Chairs Missing*. A To Z, Newman's first solo effort, was not as good, but still not bad. Oh,

Newman was in Wire, but I guess that's obvious.

This pretentiously-titled second album has no lyrics, but two lots of vocals - humming and stuff. The remaining instrumental tracks are not special enough to survive without songs on top of them, except for 'Fish 6', which is more basic than anything on *Flowers of Romance*, and works very well indeed. It consists of an erratic percussion noise, and a tiny tinkling that becomes a vicious horde of Texas chainsaw insects.

The rest works best as background stuff, played at low volume while you're dusting or knitting or writing a novel, or figuring out whether you should go out to see a band you dislike at a venue you hate, or stay home and play Monopoly with the TV on. If you need that kind of music (Eno seems to think you do), then buy this album.

If not, tape 'Fish 6' and buy a bottle of ...

Chris Knox
AC/DC
TNT
High Voltage
Let There Be Rock
Alberts

Released again after the band's phenomenal recent popularity, the first three AC/DC albums show they have changed little since the vintage TNT. Obviously recording and production techniques have tightened up considerably, but their basic, no-nonsense, give-the-people-what-they-want approach is most refreshing.

Steeped in a Glasgow blues background, Bon Scott's aggressive, sometimes plaintive, often tongue in cheek vocals show him up as one of the great rock singers, while Angus Young, of the demented schoolboy appearance, could trade licks with a host of the so-called great guitarists. In Phil Rudd, AC/DC possess one of the masters of rock-solid drumming - no technician, but some of his cymbal crashes send a shiver down your spine.

There are too many good tracks to mention. If you like your rock heavy, buy all three albums. You won't regret it. **Greg Cobb**

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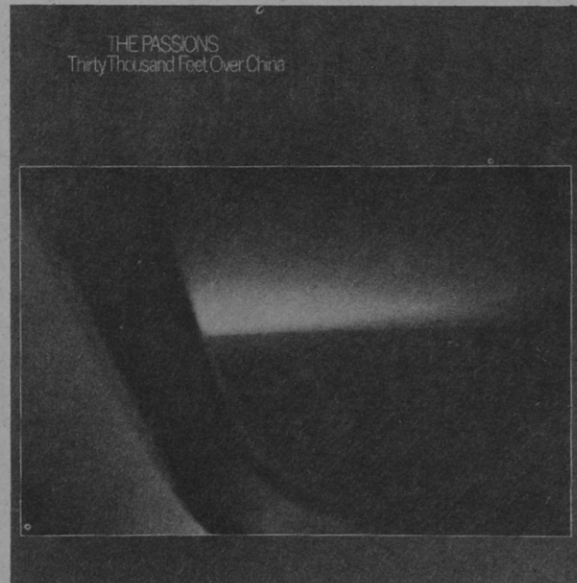
ESSENTIAL ENGLISH



KING CRIMSON
'Discipline'

Back after 7 years, Robert Fripp, Adrian Belew, Tony Levin and Bill Bruford. "Moments of greatness in the direction of current Talking Heads." (Melody Maker)

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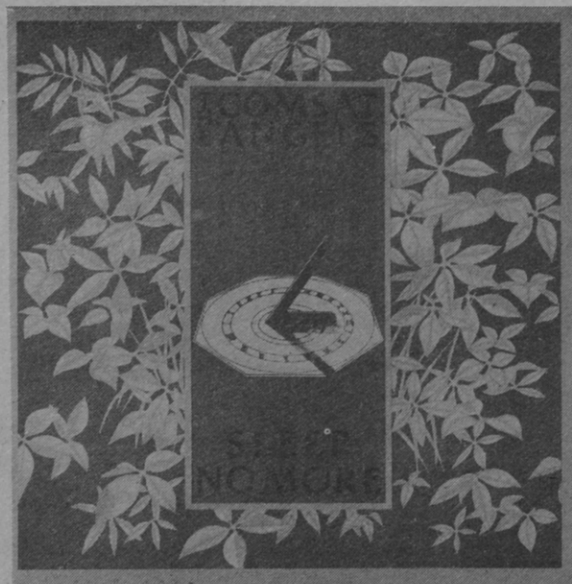


PASSIONS
'30,000 ft. Over China'

Featuring all 3 UK hit singles: 'The Swimmer', 'Skin Deep' and 'German Filmstar'. "A disturbing delight: impressive, expressive and stubbornly, strangely reassuring." (Melody Maker)

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COMSAT ANGELS

'Sleep No More'

"The band attain the drama and immediacy of Joy Division." (NME)
"In short, the Comsats have delivered a masterpiece. No other record has managed this since Joy Division's 'Closer'." (Melody Maker)

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KILLING JOKE

'What's This For'

"An excellent record. The same wardance as before, but slightly better realised." (NME)
"Hypnotic, throbbing music that grows on the listener." (BB)
Killing Joke sing about things people would rather forget.

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