

BRIEFS

The B52s Mesopotamia (WEA)

Listen, the B52s have only themselves to blame for the current indifference towards their music. The initial promise of their first album became too stylised and formula-bound by their second and this Byrne produced mini album although an improvement does not contain the stuff that legends are made of. They dip, jerk and dive through six tracks, 'Loveland' and 'Cake' being the best slices. But still too preened for their own good. GK

J. Geils Band Freeze Frame (EMI)

What these guys have got going for them is a truly amazing arrangers' touch and the gall to carry it to the verge of camp. This means that even the tripey tracks come out listenable/amusing, and that when they do come up with a decent tune, generally a couple per album, it's a real gem. The 'rose among the thorns' this time is the title track with its vast fruity organ and horn opening and everything short of the kitchen sink thrown in to follow. The single 'Centrefold', despite its terminally unhip flippancy manages to survive repeated playings, as does the Philly rip-off 'Do You Remember When'. DM

Not The Nine O'Clock News Hedgehog Sandwich (BBC)

This collection is from the original 1980 British series, not the repackaged edition currently screening here. Consequently many skits don't work because either their satire was too locally focused (who's Sir Robert Mark), timely (Reagan is no longer newly elected) or they simply were not that funny in the first place (news flash one-liners). Still others are pale re-runs of concepts used by previous (and better) English comedy teams. A couple are hilarious on a poos and wees level and one or two are genuinely first rate (eg shopping for a stereo). Not the best comedy album. PT

The Jacksons, Live (Epic)
Recent video of the Jacksons suggest they may be angling for the Nobel Peace Prize. More than just a group; the suggestion is that the power of the boogie can bring all people together. So this live album plays up the idea of a Jacksons' concert as more than just a show - it's an event. You get the sound of the Jacksons arriving in a spaceship, Michael's heart-throb antics and his jive talking with his brothers. But

you also get lively versions of material from the last Jacksons' albums and Michael's *Off The Wall* LP. And if some of the songs do lack the depth of the studio versions, a keener drive is substituted. AD

Tom Robinson Band (EMI)

Basically a collection of songs that never made it onto either of Robinson's two albums with the addition of a more abrasive mix of his collaboration with Gabriel, 'Bully For You' and a live 'Winter of '79'. Robinson used rock 'n' roll as an explicit political/social platform, consequently his '2-4-6-8-Motorway', 'Glad To Be Gay', 'Don't Take No For An Answer' and 'Getting Tighter' remain as little more than nostalgic, let's-demonstrate chants. Sincerity ain't enough. GK

Hot Gossip Geisha Boys and Temple Girls (RTC)

Heaven 17's affiliated British Electric Foundation go from the sublime (*Penthouse and Pavement*) to the ridiculous - meaning this album of past Human League songs ('Morale' and 'Circus of Death'), Heaven 17 ('Soul Warfare' and the title track) and Talking Heads' ('Houses in Motion') pickings recorded by Kenny Everett's sex 'n' sweat dance troupe, Arlene

Phillips' Hot Gossip. Inspid, colourless vocals and feeble instrumentation make for an altogether pointless exercise. GK
Randy Newman
Ragtime (Elektra)

Most film soundtrack music is so tied to the visual images it accompanies that it cannot stand alone. *Ragtime* is one of those wonderful exceptions. Randy Newman's uncles were among the mainstays of Hollywood music for several decades, and Newman is one of the most cinematic writers. Here he reworks many of his quirky melodies to form a delicious mosaic of turn-of-the-century America. As well as Newman's piano, swelling strings and tubas make this a delight. Uncle Alfred would have been proud. KW

Michael Franks Objects of Desire (Warner Bros)

Frank's brand of airy, jazzy pop has always been precariously poised between charming whimsy and mere wimpishness. It all depends on the songs and here about two thirds of them make it through the usual ultra-smooth, intimate delivery. Whatever, Franks must still attract legions of local buyers because, after half a dozen albums, he can still afford the most expensive sessionmen. PT

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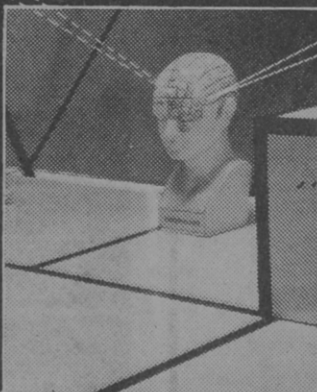
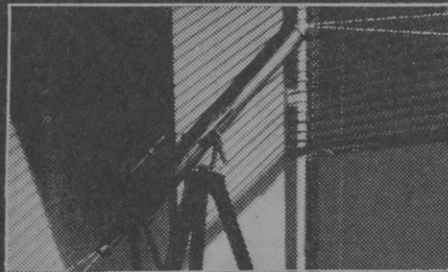
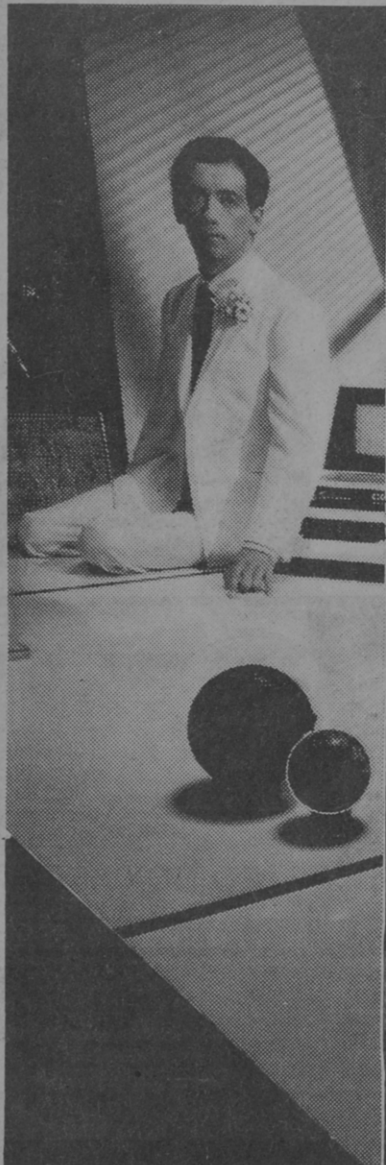
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