

Squeeze
Sweets From A Stranger
A&M

It's taken long enough for Squeeze to climb from Cockney anonymity to their present well-respected niche. Critical acclaim was slow in arriving, in fact it wasn't really until last year's *East Side Story* that the Tilbrook-Difford songwriting team received the accolades they deserved that were denied them on *Cool For Cats* and *Argy Bargy*.

Sweets From A Stranger again sees them in top form. On keyboards Don Snow has replaced Paul Carrack and listening to the piano flourishes on the excellent 'I've Returned' and 'His House, Her Home', Snow's a paid-up member of the Costello fan club.

With the lyrical focus on the bitter-sweet world of love and ladies, Tilbrook and Difford show the touch of craftsmen. 'Out of Touch' and 'I Can't Hold On' are typical Squeeze mid-tempo outings, solid melodies with an eye for detail. 'When the Hangover Strikes' is an amusing 1930s cocktail pastiche, you know the feeling. 'Black Coffee In Bed' (with Costello on back-up vocals) is a sure-fire shot of soul and Tongue Like A Knife takes care of sensuality.

Sweets From A Stranger is assured, sophisticated and bustin' out with good songs. Squeeze can do no wrong around this house. Cool for any cat.

George Kay

Altered Images
Pinky Blue
Epic

Background to the Sound of Twee: We find Altered Images growing up in Scotland with lead singer Clare Grogan being smitten by the dubious charms of Siouxsee.

An influence more readily discernible on the Images' first album *Happy Birthday*, a more serious approach to pop than is evidenced on their first album release here, *Pinky Blue*.

The success of their 'Happy Birthday' and 'I Could Be Happy' singles has led the band to exploit the bright-faced innocence and kindergarten cuteness of the Grogan presence. Right from the eye-catching pre-school tackiness of the cover and its title, the album exudes a sweetness that spills into self-parody.

The title song, 'See Those Eyes' and 'Forgotten' are immediate overdose but it's on Clare's rendition of Neil Diamond's 'Song Sung Blue' that her affected lisp and fey mannerisms go way over tolerance level. The best moments are undoubtedly the two hit singles — the 12 inch version of 'I Could Be Happy' and last year's 'Happy Birthday', included on the local pressings of *Pinky Blue*.

The band is polished and restrained seemingly content to allow Clare to lead them to pop confection. But they should realise



Squeeze doodles
Below: Altered Images



X **Hambi and the Dance** **Miles Davis**



that they don't have to sound this sweet to make successful pop. Diabetics Beware.

George Kay

Various Artists
Sex, Sweat & Blood
Beggars Banquet

The wheel goes full circle and it seems that the pronouncements of yesterday are the hypocracies of today. It doesn't take much of a memory to remember when that beat was decidedly unchic and "Death to Disco" badges were everywhere.

But who cares? Rock 'n' roll has always been a series of contradictions and this is closer to the rock 'n' roll spirit than the vast numbers of dinosaurs radio foists upon us in the name of rock music.

What we have here is, according to your point of view, a representative sampler of the current musical trends or another batch of nine day wonders. Whatever, I find this collection highly preferable to many of the depressing drones that appeared in the wake

of Joy Division. This is fun with style.

Easy to move to, and uplifting, this collection's high points for me are Lora Logic's 'Wonderful Offer', Maximum Joy's 'Stretch', Dance's 'In Lust' and Medium Medium's 'So Hungry, So Angry' — all of which sound very vital and extremely danceable.

An easy remedy for these grey days.

Simon Grigg

X **Under the Big Black Sun**
Elektra

Something, at last, is stirring in the rock'n'roll breast of suburban America. Stifled by years of high rotate commercial radio, apparent affluence and canned sunshine, a sub-culture of West Coast bands have emerged hell-bent on revealing the sour side of private enterprise and self-help. X's John Doe, bassist/vocalist and co-writer, puts it this way: 'The big black sun is the sun that shines on every American city, turned black by

the times, the new depression."

X are from LA and *Under the Big Black Sun* is their first shot for Elektra with their two previous albums, *Los Angeles* and *Wild Gift* being released by the indie Slash Records. Ex Doors keyboard player Ray Manzarek has produced the lot and so he shares the credit for the band's plain energetic authenticity.

The members are no spring chickens (Doe hits 30 next year) and with the exception of female vocalist/lyricist Exene Cervenka, the rest of them (Billy Zoom, guitar and sax, D.J. Bonebrake, drums) have cut their teeth on everything from bar-room rockabilly to jazz and classical. So it's not surprising that their music although direct and predominantly up-tempo, presents a hybrid front.

Delving and 'Because I Do', the title track, 'Real Child of Hell', and the staccato opening belt of 'The Hungry Wolf' are the pick of the angry crop. 'Come Back To Me' is Exene in ballad time, nice and lean, and 'Dancing With Tears In My Eyes' is as neat a piece of pure hokum as you're likely to hear. But the scene stealer is the final song, 'The Have Nots', a timeless song of working class USA.

Under The Big Black Sun is the real McCoy, a compassionate tour of the Americana you don't read about in the brochures.

George Kay

Miles Davis
We Want Miles
CBS

We Want Miles was recorded last year during Davis' first tour in seven years. Apart from one Gershwin, all the pieces are original, three previously unrecorded.

That said however, the album presents me with certain problems, not the least of which is my inbuilt antipathy towards double live albums. I always think they

could have been shaped into better single ones.

I find *We Want Miles* no exception. The fact that all four sides contain only six tracks (one a reprise) means that we get some very extended soloing. Miles, of course, is magnificent — ranging from moody to fiery, always passionate, phrasing fabulously, bringing out the best support from his band. His are the most interesting solos, though the soprano sax performances are very fine. Guitarist Mike Stern is fluent but his playing careens too close to heavy rock for comfort. (But then I never liked John McLaughlin either.) Stern's whole approach is more jarring given that the rhythm foundation of most tracks is funk.

And it is a great rhythm team. Foster is the only veteran of previous groups, and bassist Miller is a top sessionman. Too often, however, it falls on this section to hold the music up. With a tighter framework, more direction, less stretching out, this (admittedly great) jazz-funk bedrock wouldn't have such a burden.

Which brings me to my last quibble. There are too many excellent funkateers on the market getting state-of-the-art recording presence for me to willingly settle for this murky live mix.

Irritations aside, it must be said that there are passages of truly wonderful music here. Davis, in fact, probably couldn't make a bad album if he tried.

Peter Thomson

Hambi and the Dance
Heartache
Virgin

According to Hambi, the Greek kingpin fronting this latest set of Liverpoolians, Tontrix, his previous band, pre-dated the Tear-drops and the Bunnymen in opening up the so-called Liverpool scene, but they broke up before any record deal was finalised.

A hard luck story, maybe, but Hambi and his music have now reached the light of day on *Heartache*, their first album. He believes in passion and Phil Spector, two qualities he tries to bring to life on *Heartache*.

Spector virtually invented the word 'epic' as applied to pop but for me his larger-than-like approach was a barrier to emotion rather than a catalyst for real

passion. Hambi has the same problem. The album, recorded in his own Toxteth studio, tries to make grandiose passionate statements that render themselves overblown by his echo-chamber production and Demis Roussos vocals.

As a songwriter Hambi is a cut above the normal hack: 'Time After Time', 'L'Image Craque', 'The World', 'Major Major' and the most credible offering, 'Standing In the Rain', reveal a talent of sorts. But he equates epic with significance and grand melancholy with real feeling with the result that *Heartache* sounds like a melodramatic contender for the Euro-vision Song Contest.

Like Theatre of Hate's debut, the recording process cheapens the intended emotions. Oversung and overdone.

George Kay

Bob Marley and the Wailers
African Herbsman
Gems From Treasure Island
Tighten Up Vol. 2
Music World

Music World, king of the cheapies, has made a surprising venture into the reggae field of late. They've latched onto the Trojan catalogue.

Good stuff, too. The Wailers album is a collection of late 60s and early 70s material, recorded in association with Lee Perry and Clement Dodd, both of whom claimed a hand in writing some of the tracks. Some of these emerged on the *Soul Rebel* LP, issued in Britain as *Rasta Revolution*. Included are the original versions of 'Lively Up Yourself', later a standout track on *Natty Dread*, 'Small Axe' and 'Duppy Conqueror', remade for *Burnin'*, and 'Kaya', 'Sun Is Shining' and 'Don't Rock The Boat', which re-emerged on the *Kaya* LP. Also check out the classic 'Put It On' and '400 Years' singles. Sixteen tracks in all, not a dud anywhere, still fresh, profound and very upful.

The other two albums are excellent rock steady collections from the 60s. The *Treasure Island* collection includes tracks by the Paragons, the Melodians and Alton Ellis. *Tighten Up* features early work by Lee Perry, Derek Harriott and Clancy Eccles, among others. Rude, rumbustious and risible.

Duncan Campbell

England has the
ROLLING STONES
America has the
E. STREET BAND

Australia has
COLD CHISEL
and Taihape has
DAGGY & THE DICKHEADS

Their debut Mini-Album
'BROTHERS'

Out Now through WEA

IMPORT
FROM AUSTRALIA!
VINYL EYES
RECORD SPECIALISTS
PLUS VIDEOS

AT LAST A MAIL ORDER SERVICE WITH A DIFFERENCE.
OUR RANGE WILL INTEREST EVERYONE.

- ★ IMPORTS from around the world — highest quality
- ★ DELETIONS out of print
- ★ SINGLES picture sleeves, colour vinyl, etc., from 50's to 80's
- ★ SECOND HAND
- ★ COLLECTOR'S ITEMS rare
- ★ UNDERGROUNDS collector's heaven
- ★ COMPLETE HEAVY METAL SPECIALISTS
- ★ FRANK ZAPPA on Verve
- ★ HENDRIX 80 titles, plus boxed set
- ★ MICHAEL SCHENKER 'Budokan'
- ★ JAPANESE PRESSINGS
- ★ PHOTOS
- ★ T-SHIRTS
- ★ POSTERS
- ★ BADGES
- ★ PATCHES

DUE TO OUR EXTENSIVE RANGE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE
TO COMPILE A COMPLETE CATALOGUE SO PLEASE
SEND YOUR LIST OF WANTS AND INTERNATIONAL
REPLY COUPON TO

P.O. BOX 248, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA