

# Records

**Madness**  
Complete Madness  
Stiff

Finally, some nine months after UK release (withheld misguidedly waiting for Madness to have chart success) comes this year's definitive pop compilation. Pick any track on this album and it's guaranteed to be superior to anything on the last *Solid Gold* disaster.

A track listing is really superfluous, it being sufficient to say that the album contains all the obvious singles, plus a few bonuses, these being the original superior 2-Tone release of 'The Prince', which later appeared as a different recording on *One Step Beyond*, and 'In The City', the de-Honda-ised version of the Japanese car ad they made in Tokyo some time back.

In the past, Madness have never had the local success which they enjoy in Europe. They have suffered from record company apathy and New Zealand's hopelessly ignorant and backward programme directors. Maybe this album will rectify that. What a bloody wonder it would be to hear Madness on the radio, instead of Bertie Higgins and the Eagles.

*Madness, Madness, they call it Madness.*  
*If this is Madness,*  
*Then I'm full of gladness.*  
Simon Grigg

**Alastair Riddell**  
Positive Action  
WEA

I must have played this album close on 20 times and I'm still discovering new things. The fact that it's still fresh and interesting is a tribute to a very talented and persistent man.

Riddell seems to have settled down and found his niche after drifting unhappily and without direction in the post-glam limbo following the demise of Space Waltz. *Positive Action* is as assertive as its title suggests and Riddell has never sounded so confident.

The synthesiser plays a major role, both percussive and melodic.

The ever-present danger of over-indulgence is neatly avoided. Riddell is relatively new to the instrument and thus treads carefully, much to his credit. He's ably assisted with some deft programming by Paul Crowther.

Most of these songs should work even better on stage. The opener, 'Do You Read Me' is one of his best ever, a pacey number with a mighty chorus and crashing synth percussion. The album's other rocker, 'Finest Dream', is heavier on the guitar and features another strong hookline. The familiar 'Zero' is a re-recorded and much superior version. Riddell's romantic soul finds its expression in the new single, 'Let Her Know', a good radio shot and the sentimental 'Passion & Love'. 'Futura' and the title track are both bouncy and optimistic, reflecting Riddell's new-found energy, while 'We All Take Off' and 'I Saw The World' are more reflective. Lessons have been learned. 'Have A Heart' is Riddell's best vocal performance, a dark and broody song with a lot of tension.

*Positive Action* is a return from the wilderness by a much-underrated performer. The forthcoming concerts should confirm his status as one of our premier talents. And not before time, either.  
Duncan Campbell

**Go Go's**  
Vacation  
Illegal Records

You would be forgiven for believing that the Go Go's are a manufactured all-girl Monkees. Last year they emerged out of the L.A. blue and quickly made in-roads into the lucrative American Top 40 industry. But in effect these five dames have been slugging away since 1978 and it wasn't until last year that they got any sort of record deal.

My initial scepticism melted after the great first side pop of their *Beauty and the Beat* album and it's no surprise, but a little of a disappointment, that *Vacation* can't match that.

They've continued to celebrate and, at the same time, satirize kitsch American stardom on their album sleeves and they've kept up their fusion of streamlined pop with its associated gift-wrapped romanticism. And that's OK to a point.



Fashion

Again the first side features the best tunes — 'Vacation', 'Girl of 100 Lists' and 'We Don't Get Along' are custom-made hits, refined glossy magazines full of true confessions. Flip over and another version of 'Cool Jerk' we don't need but 'Get Up and Go' and the best moment, 'Worlds Away', make some amends.

Fine, fun, but already the whole thing's too slick and this is only their second album. Nobody wants them to become the female equivalent of the Fall (although that wouldn't be too bad) but on *Vacation* there's a feeling that the Go Go's are beginning to give the people what they want rather than what they need.  
George Kay

**Joe Cocker**  
Sheffield Steel  
Liberation

Joe Cocker's recording career never seemed to recover after the apparently shattering experience of the Mad Dogs and Englishmen tour with Leon Russell. He made some fair, even quite good, records, but it didn't seem to be there any more. I'm pleased to report that *Sheffield Steel* is a return to the great form of the past.

Cocker is in fine voice. He sounds inspired as he rides on top of the rhythm bed of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare. They're the fulcrum for the album and it's interesting that where once the drums and bass were bottom of the personnel order, Dunbar and Shakespeare are listed just behind Cocker.

The material is strong, songs by Bob Dylan ('Seven Days'), Randy Newman ('Marie'), Jimmy Cliff ('Many Rivers to Cross'), Andy Fraser's 'Sweet Little Woman' is a strong single, but it's Meters' guitarist Leo Nocentelli's 'Look What You've Done' that is my personal favourite.

The songs are the sort of thing Cocker is best at, a song of emotional depth couched in simple terms. Cocker seems to stumble on the "poetry" of the Steve Winwood/Will Jennings song, 'Talking Back to the Night' on *Sheffield Steel*. On the other hand, he turns what seemed a throwaway, Dylan's 'Seven Days', into a tour de force, transforming the clichéd "she'll be coming home / I'll be waiting at the station" theme into a sermon of longing. Echoes of Al Green's 'Take Me to The River', or do my ears deceive me?

For a while it looked as if Cocker would remain one of his period's most pathetic, visible casualties. *Sheffield Steel* will confirm the loyalty of those who hadn't quite written him off.  
Ken Williams

**Fashion**  
Fabrique  
Arista

There's a smart designer at work here. Birmingham group Fashion, after one poorly received album (unreleased here), were simply not being noticed. Until that is, they recruited singer/guitarist/songwriter De Harriss. Harriss wrote and sang every number here and was also behind the move to cut *Fabrique* at studios in Paris and Cologne. As a result, Fashion's lean and rangy electro-funk takes on the coolly precise distancing often associated with teutonic productions.

By and large such an atmospheric approach suits the band's sinuous, uncluttered arrangements. Unfortunately, beyond the dance floor, only four or five tracks have sufficient melodic strength to stand repeated exposure. Two of the best tracks are the least danceable — the slower numbers that close each side allow producer Zeus Held (love that name) to indulge his majesty for romantic mood-making. Otherwise, the current single, 'Love Shadow', pretty much exemplifies the best of Fashion appeal.

Considering Harriss' pivotal position on the album, his recently announced replacement by ex Teardrop Troy Tate undoubtedly augurs changes for the ensuing season.  
Peter Thomson

**Various Artists**  
The British Pop Collection  
EMI

Just about the best Christmas gift you could give anyone, especially if they need educating on the subject of pop music. This beautifully packaged three-album set, compiled by Bruce Ward, says it all.

For those who grew up in it, the sixties was an unforgettable era. The seeds of rebellion sown in the middle to late 1950's grew into a fully-fledged youth culture, with its own styles, image and language and above all, its music. The

sixties spawned the greatest groups of all time. There was a matchless optimism, a timeless sense of euphoria, lost forever in the cynical seventies.

Sixty tracks here, every one a hit. Everyone will query some of the selections, according to their likes (I, for one, will never be convinced that 'Ten Guitars' had any aesthetic value as a pop song). But for me, the collection is worth its price just for 'Blackberry Way' by the Move, the Casuals' 'Jesamine' and Spencer Davis' 'Gimme Some Lovin'.

Wallow in some nostalgia. Sure, there are plenty of tracks missing. Where do you start, with all that incredible music to choose from? Anyway, they can always issue another compilation. I would beg for the honour of putting it together.  
Duncan Campbell

**The Birthday Party**  
Junkyard  
Propeller.

Junk junk junk dead girls junk junk blades and blood and junk and dead girls and junk *Westside Story* and John Cale and JUNK. You think maybe I overstress junk junk junk junk and the dead girl? You ain't heard nuthin' yet.

Orstralia 'got no problems, got no wars, you don't need your brain no more' (The Saints). Only Saints say such things as these' (Birthday Party). Jesus gets his. Jesus, what a country! Little River Band and this! Hoohah! This is a big giggle. This is a big giggle! Piss in a bottle. Bleed in a Darlinghurst gutter. Old ladies in kleensaks and 'there's a garbage in honey's sack again.' Pow pow pow pow lomo loca wow wow wow. Hamlet gets his.

Sounds like: someone you hate screaming at you from the depths of a school hall/public swimming pool! Extreme negativity masquerading as negative extremity: a sales rep on acid writing 'Do not buy this product' in 100-foot high letters: someone you love dying in your lap, shitting their pants and drooling in your averted ear, about to rot. Doesn't sound like: *Prayers On Fire*: Oz rock: much.

This is s'posed to be 200 words, but I'll just start repeating, repeating pow pow pow repeating myself.  
Chris Knox

# FINAL MIX

\$8.99

OUT SOON!

**DAVE MCARTNEY**  
Dying In Public  
(previously unreleased)

**SWINGERS**  
One Good Reason

**MIDGE MARSDEN**  
Slow Walk Jive Talk

**POP MECHANIX**  
Now

**COUP D'ETAT**  
Permanent Hire

**ALASTAIR RIDDELL**  
Wonder Ones (remix)

**TECHTONES**  
State of Mind

**KARL GORDON**  
Do You Believe

**TICKET** **PAUL AGAR**  
Country High      Your Eyes

**BLONDE COMEDY**  
Kid's Are Crying

**CROCODILES**  
New Wave Goodbye

**HATTIE & THE HOTSHOTS**  
Why Jamaica (remix)

**NEONS**  
Time Of The Season

**CITIZEN BAND**  
Holy Fulele

Mandrill  
thru  
polyGram

**MANDRILL**  
thru  
polyGram