

STARS

IN MY EYES

Records

Siouxsie and the Banshees A Kiss in the Dreamhouse Polydor

From the initial punk explosion, only the Clash and the Banshees remain. The Jam have split and, while the Clash were lost in the supermarkets of America, the Banshees broke out of their wall-to-wall cacophony to produce some of the finest singles of the last five years.

At the start of this year, it seemed the end had come for Siouxsie and the Banshees. Despite being voted best female vocalist in NME polls for the second year running, Sioux had problems. Her voice was failing. She underwent treatment and in March the Banshees toured Japan, then released the single 'Fireworks'.

A Kiss in the Dreamhouse is the Banshees' fifth album, their third with the present lineup. It is this band's cohesion of ideas and ability that enables them to produce an album of such importance. From the opening bars of the joyous 'Cascade', to the not so salubrious depths of 'Slowdive', it bristles with intensity.

Inbetween, there is a new-found freedom, using previously unfamiliar instruments. On 'Greenfingers', McGeoch plays recorder, while on 'Obsession', bells, cello and violins create the desired eeriness. Throughout, Budgie's drums punctuate with perfect discrimination the guilded genius of Severin's bass lines. Nowhere do they fall into the overbearing tedium of *JuJu's* 'Night Shift' or 'Voodoo Dolly'. Instead, accessibility is maintained throughout. The result is something rare in this day of the hit single/filler album; a total record, one that never falters in its promise to provide 40 minutes of aural pleasure.

Only time will tell as to which album is, was, or will be the Banshees' pinnacle. *A Kiss in the Dreamhouse* currently rates equal with *Kaleidoscope* and that must make it one of this year's top recordings.

Mark Phillips

Yazoo Upstairs at Eric's Mute

If there's been anything offensive or irritating about the new pop wonderkids it's been their self-conscious look-at-me-I'm-naive-and-cute-and-I-love-pop attitude. Love and synthesisers have become passwords to commerciality like the trite catchy little ditties the new song forms aspire to.

Depeche Mode were one of the biggest offenders and, until recently, were the vehicle for the songs of Vince Clarke, a bright new pin who has since formed Yazoo with female vocalist



Siouxsie

Genevieve Moyet. She's a singer, a voice of depth and warmth, a soul singer where passion replaces posture and, together, they've stumbled on innovation in 1982. Believe it.

And believe this — there isn't a bad song on their first album, *Upstairs at Eric's*, a reference to producer Eric Radcliffe's facilities. Their two singles 'Only You' and 'Don't Go' are representative of their approach but are by no means their best songs. 'Too Pieces', 'Bad Connection', 'Midnight' and 'Winter Kills' are less immediate but more lasting and 'I Before E Except After C' is Vince Clarke experimental time where he plays with word repetitions interspersed by synthesiser lines and Moyet backchat. A vein worth tapping.

The whole white-boy anaemia of the syntho-pop genre pales beside the presence of a real voice, a real feeling. Clarke's innovation is the blending of the realism and pathos of soul/R&B with the melodic buoyancy of the current synthesiser fetish. Compulsory entertainment.

George Kay
Led Zeppelin
Coda
Swansong

As a high school student, I



remember the excitement among my friends on the release of *Led Zeppelin III*. The band were held in great awe, we knew every note on *I* and *II* backwards and spent hours debating the merits of Jimmy Page versus Alvin Lee and Eric Clapton. Little did we know that even better was to come in the shape of *IV*, one of the seminal rock albums. Indeed, 'Stairway to Heaven' is still regarded as the all-time greatest track by many.

Zeppelin's vinyl output over the years continued at an impeccably high standard (if less innovative). Until now. With Bonzo dead and the band no more, what should have been a glorious footnote to a great career turns out to be a ripoff. Barely 30 minutes of sloppy, unmelodious leftovers is hardly a fitting farewell. Even another live double would have been better than this.

So to the 'music'. Eight tracks, consisting at one end of the scale of a live rendition of 'I Can't Quit You Baby', full of the glorious power and dynamics of yesterday, to the embarrassing 'Bonzo's Montreux', a feeble drum solo enhanced by a few electronic squeaks. The other six tracks could only be described as second-rate filler, understandably left off earlier releases.

It's hard to believe this was sanctioned by Jimmy Page. Surely he can't need the money? Not the Christmas bonus I was hoping for. Chris Caddick

Danse Macabre Last Request Reaction Records

Danse Macabre are no more. A popular band in Auckland but less well known in southerly regions,

their debut EP *Betwee... Lines* evinced a healthy talent, if one a little too easily compared with the likes of Joy Division. *Last Request*, a posthumous, seven track, mini-album retailing for \$7.99, is a more comfortable effort. Superbly produced by Trevor Reekie it features more complex, absorbing work and showcases the band — warts and all — at its peak.

The rhythm section dominates while guitar and synthesiser add the atmosphere. Everything gels perfectly on 'Web' — an instrumental of great style and finesse. 'Sanctum', with a harsh alive feel closes with some memorable instrumental work, while 'Skyline' scores with a similarly moody tone; evident more in the vocals than the cleverly ambivalent music. 'Terminal' with occasional barrages of eccentric guitar and solid rhythm also rates highly.

Faults are few. 'Nexus' featuring a familiar bass line — shades of Young Marble Giants — doesn't quite come off because of over-ambitious guitar and 'Ambassador' is plainly a weaker song. More serious is Nigel Russell's vocal style which has not developed significantly and tends to be a little too forced on occasion. But this fails to detract from the songs because of the sympathetic production, placing the vocals lower in the mix.

This is your last chance to dance with Macabre. It's a fine effort and a gracious way to bow out. David Taylor

The Beat Special Beat Service Go-Feet

It's tough being the Beat because they've so much to live up to. Their first album was adrenalin

plus, sheer exhilaration in tunes that were inspired and lyrics that focussed perfectly on the rising social aggravation in Britain. The next step, *Wha'ppen*, Wakeling considered to be an over-compensation for the hyper-danceability of *I Just Can't Stop It*, but it was still a hefty album where music matched moods and the moods were bleaker.

Now, with critics snapping about the Beat's lethargy of late, they've come up with *Special Beat Service*, an album that lies uneasily between the other two. In songs like 'She's Going', 'Spar Wid Me', 'Sugar and Stress' and 'Sorry', they've tried to guide things into the top gear of the first album but the songs aren't memorable enough to stay in the race.

But times change and the Beat have matured as people, particularly Dave Wakeling whose lyrics have veered sharply from the political to the personal. And it's this personal view that yields the album's two best songs in the superb 'I Confess' and 'End of the Party'. In the middle order there's the not-half-bad sleeper 'Save It For Later', the fluid enjoyment of 'Sole Salvation', 'Ackee 123' and the irresistible throwaway 'Jeanette'.

Look at it this way, the Beat, like the Clash and the Specials, have put their balls on the line in the midst of a rock scene that's full of nancy boys and bandwagon funkettes. Wakeling and co. are real people loaded with that tired old word, integrity. *Special Beat Service* may be a mediocre Beat album but it has far more personal investment than most of the pap currently available. George Kay

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