

# Records

## Split Enz Enz of an Era Mushroom

A fitting closure to 10 eventful years, even if the colours on the cover evoke nausea. Hand picked by our favourite sons and offering a few clues on their favourite moments.

Everyone has their most popular Enz period, of course. My own was *Dizrythmia*, when the Pommy rhythm section added some much-needed clout to the Finnsical whimsies. 'My Mistake' and 'Bold As Brass' were obvious choices, but 'Parrot Fashion Love' and 'Jamboree' were equal crowd pleasers and it would have been nice to see that criterion used occasionally, instead of just the number of units they shifted.

Also sady omitted altogether is *Mental Notes*, which some die-hards still insist is the best, Gothic nightmares and all. The Manzanera-produced remake of '129' (under the title 'Matinee Idol') just doesn't have the guts of the original (remember *Studio One* and Phil Warren saying they were 'too clever'? Ah, memories).

Everything else is familiar stuff from the last three albums and I do not intend to rehash old accolades. I mean, everyone knows Ed Hillary was a good mountain climber. The two pleasant curiosities are 'Late Last Night', Phil Judd's most untypical South Pacific serenade (at least his contribution doesn't go totally uncredited) and 'Another Great Divide', that odd London single of 1976, much underrated here. The band played it on one tour, then dropped it. As a live song it was great, with an extended instrumental piece in the middle. The Poms went nuts over that line 'neurotic, psychotic, you name it, she got it'. I thought it one of their finest.

Can they make it through another 10? It's the decent thing to do your best...

Duncan Campbell



Split Enz



Captain Beefheart

## Simple Minds Real to Real Cacophony Virgin

Their second album and the missing link between *Life In A Day* and *Empires and Dance*. It was released at the end of 1979 in Britain, the same year as *Life In A Day* and comparisons between the two certainly show the immaturity of their first album, but three years on and three great albums later and it's got to be admitted that *Real to Real* itself shows its age.

According to the band it was virtually a spontaneous studio effort and that's particularly evident on 'Citizen', 'Cacophony' and 'Scar' where they've touched on individual ideas but left them undeveloped. Affection and admiration for past influences are more than apparent on 'Real to Real', 'Naked Eye' and 'Calling Your Name', songs that re-echo Magazine advances.

But the real achievements, the atmosphere and confidence that we associate with present-day Simple Minds, are confined mainly to three songs, 'Factory', 'Premonition' and 'Changeling', all of them available on the *Celebration* compilation.

*Real to Real Cacophony* is the first true Simple Minds' album

meaning that originality outshines derivation. But its time-worn character prevents it from standing beside *Empires and Dance*, *Sons and Fascination* and *New Gold Dream* as the real nucleus of Simple Minds' music this far.

George Kay

## Zoo Cowboys and Engines CBS

Conceived by Pop Mechanix out of NZ Pop, after a long period of gestation, but finally with us, Zoo's debut album achieves precisely what the band wanted: to show where they stood at the time it was made and to give a hint of where they're going.

It's plain that a lot of time and care was taken to remake these tracks when Snoid left. John Wood's mixing is especially sympathetic, giving each instrument its full prominence and allowing Paul Scott to show he's a strong and confident singer.

Of all the songs, 'Keep It Up' has new lyrics, 'Texas' is much the same as the single version and 'Holidays', Scott's sermon on Catholic guilt, is given a nice, tense arrangement, with the churchy organ neatly shattered by a searing guitar solo from Paul Mason.

'Love Comes To The Rescue'

has the feel of a classic New Zealand pop song of the 60s, especially in the keyboards. A year ago, it would have been a superb single, but the next one will be 'Private Military' and with good reason. The closest comparison I can find is the Clash, both in the attack of the rhythm guitars and the chorus vocals, not to mention the lyrics:

*Like walking with the dead  
Such intimate company,  
All those severed fingers  
Point the way to Hell.*

'Shah Yafir' is new in style, reflecting on domestic violence and punctuated by rolling waves of drums. 'Land Of Broken Dreams' is a sombre piece about immigrants who never find their pot of gold, featuring acoustic guitars and nostalgic mandolins. 'Post Office Towers' is a swipe at bureaucracy and 'Cowboys' is a fractured semi-reggae instrumental, dreamed up on a wet weekend in Taupo. 'Turning Black', which finishes the album, is a brisk two-in-a-bar rocker, about a friend of Scott's who died accidentally and inability to come to terms with death.

Conclusions? This band is alive and well. It is growing, moving in new directions, and could spring some big surprises next year. Meanwhile, playing *Cowboys and Engines* is a lot more fun than hide and seek.

Duncan Campbell

## Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band Ice Cream For Crow Virgin

After the two-album year of 1980 with *Doc At the Radar Station* and *Shiny Beast*, Beefheart's silence of last year is forgivable. Reports of his quiet, secluded life on the edge of Death Valley filtered back adding to the already formidable volume of Beefheart legend.

Now, with another semi-new Magic Band, guitarists Jeff Teper and Gary Lucas having appeared on the 1980 albums, we have *Ice Cream For Crow*, a collection of desert images sifted through Beefheart's humour and imagination. The band and arrangements and consequently the album, are his most orthodox in a while, but that's no real complaint.

Teper and Lucas carry the burdens and their empathy and

ability are evident on the delightful instrumental 'Semi-Multi-coloured Caucasian' and on the mutant boogies of 'Ice Cream For Crow' and 'The Past Sure Is Tense'. Vocally Beefheart doesn't push himself as hard as he did on *Doc* or *Shiny Beast* and his arrangements, with the exception of 'The Thousandth and Tenth Day of the Human Totem Pole' are more uniform and conservative than usual.

Criticisms, maybe, but *Crow* is a good album, limited and less adventurous than past efforts but more accessible and settled. In many ways it's a rejection of the pressures of the past ('The Past Sure Is Tense') and an open welcome to tranquillity and timelessness where there's time to absorb ('Cardboard Cutout Sundown' and '81 Poop Hatch') and communicate. Beefheart's getting old but a rocking chair on some old western porch watching the sunset is still a while away and like the man says:

*Not even a rustler'd have anything to do with this branded bum steer world.*

George Kay

## Japan Assemblage RCA

Japan have always seemed a mite pretty, poised as if contemplating life's meaning or tomorrow's mascara. Their best music dispels the image. *Assemblage*, a package representing Japan's work with Hansa Records (1978-81), is striking — the band flirts with convention but delivers something ultimately more satisfying.

Quirky yet accessible, these songs retrospectively prove Japan to be stylistic frontrunners. Their synth/drum sound and Ferry-influenced vocals have now become a norm. And the band has kept abreast of developments since, as the two Virgin albums *Gentlemen Take Polaroids* and *Tin Drum*, witness.

*Assemblage* catalogues the development of their craft: initially stark and with greater reliance on guitar, latterly finely polished. Yet 'Adolescent Sex' and 'Communist China' from the debut album stand tall beside more recent gems like 'European Son' and the aching version of 'Smoke Robinson's 1 Second That Emo-

tion'. 'Stateline', built around a simple riff and vocal whine, is less effective than the political funk of 'Rhodesia' or the sidelong social sneer of 'All Tomorrow's Parties'. Hypnotic and bouncy, 'Life In Tokyo' is Japan's nod at their oriental connection.

With the inclusion of several otherwise unavailable songs and sensible track placing, *Assemblage* has a standing and fluency unusual in a compilation. Forget Japan's visual appearance, aurally they provide treats for anyone with a yen to discover new delights.

David Taylor

## Various Artists A Christmas Record Ze

Michael Zilka (the wealthy young Z in 'Ze') would like to invite you all to his place for Christmas dinner this year. Well actually, it's last year's Christmas dinner reheated.

I didn't make it last year, but from the evidence here I'd say Christmas at Michael's would be a somewhat sobering experience. How many depressing Christmas songs do you know? Well here are three to start with. Christina, Suicide and Davitt Sigerson will have you longing for Boxing Day. And as for James White's 'Christmas With Satan', I'm sure James has a bright career ahead of him — as a baker, carpenter or anything else, I hope.

That's the sour side of this particular Christmas party, a revamped edition of 1981's *Ze Christmas Album* which, as the non-removable sticker on the sleeve says, is 'a special improved 1982 edition with new tracks.'

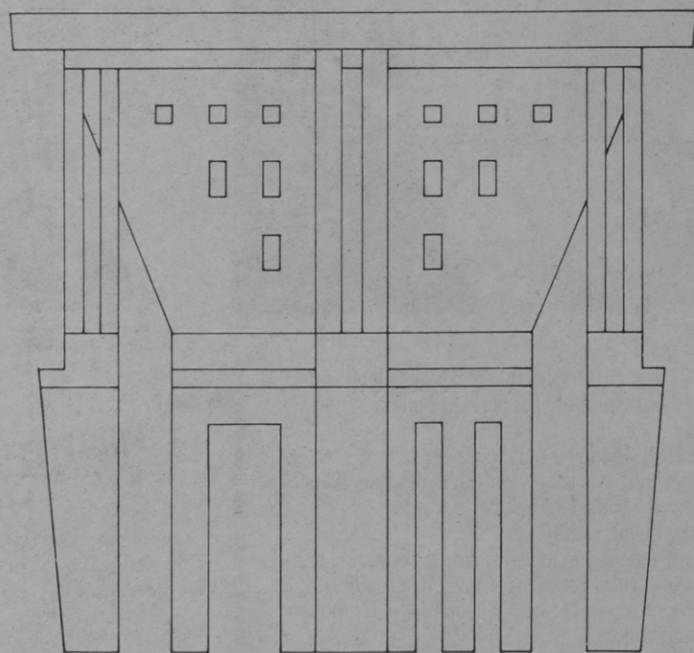
The particular Christmas cheer you'll find here comes from the Three Courgettes, the Waitresses, August Darnell and especially Material, featuring Nona Hendryx, with the seminal 'It's A Holiday', a Yule tune the equal of any you'll hear, although inexplicably, the track has been edited from the 1981 cut, also available as a 12-inch.

As they say on the radio, 'Let's talk turkey.' Nona Hendryx, August Darnell and the Three Courgettes excluded, it's fair to say, come back Phil Spector, all is forgiven.

Simon Grigg

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(see *Coruba Calendar*)

