

# Records

U2  
War  
Island

In only two albums, *Boy* and *October*, Dublin's U2 have established themselves as the great populist romantics. Chiming guitars from The Edge, Bono's lofty melancholy and the persistent concussion of Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen, have carried their crusade to near legendary status. The question is: are they merely sound and fury signifying the old cliché or are they as important as they sound?

*War*, although better than its predecessors, still leaves me suspecting the former, because U2 walk that fine line between sincere emotional simplicity and sentimental exaggeration. On 'Sunday Bloody Sunday', 'New Year's Day', 'Two Hearts Beat As One' and 'Red Light' they follow the pattern set by 'I Will Follow', 'Gloria' and 'Rejoice', that of overstatement coupled with a certain amount of melodic and production compulsion. Drama is, after all, hard to

resist. But their cathedral amplification of basic feelings is too graphic, too obvious and immediate for any lasting effect. However on 'Drowning Man' and 'Surrender' (don't count the throwaway '40') they come as close as they've ever been to harnessing subtlety to feeling.

So U2 continue to glorify and romanticise whatever they turn their minds to and as such *War* is only a flesh wound. They've still a ways to go before they really reach the soul.

George Kay

## Bauhaus The Sky's Gone Out Beggars Banquet

The bodies sink and fall into the stifling decay, other souls writhe under a black and bloated sun and babies scream unheeded in their crawling blanket of dust and vermin. The stifling air crackles and pulses with sounds primordial, chilling, derisive: from the depths of a dingy basement somewhere in England, the band plays on...

And so Bauhaus give us their latest sordid masterpiece — a double package comprising *The Sky's Gone Out* (all new material except for the cover of Eno's 'Third Uncle') and the bonus album, *Press the Eject and Give Me the Tape*, a collection of live recordings



U2

made during 1981 and 1982.

The new material is more uncompromising than ever and makes heavy demands on the listener. The style is sparser, more disjointed and subtler than on *Mask*, with an even more sinister end result. 'Swing the Heartache', 'All We Ever Wanted...' and 'In the Night' carry off this bleak vista with the most conviction, although every track on the album is superb in its own right.

If this fails to grab you, then be assured that the live album will. All but three songs are taken from *Flat Field* and *Mask*. Not on either album are 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' (now virtually unobtainable) and an excellent rendition of John Cale's 'Rose Garden, Funeral of Sores'.

The self-assurance and musical expertise evident in their live

performances makes for some scintillating listening. They take full advantage of reverb and feedback — a hindrance to many live performers — to project a raw energy lacking in many of the studio versions. The overall effect is devastating.

*The Sky's Gone Out* is undeniable proof of the band's abilities, both on stage and off. Buy it before the holocaust.

Raymond Russell

## No Tag Can We Get Away With It? Propeller

Doing this live album was a good idea for No Tag. It was an extremely cheap way to get a large number of songs on vinyl and it captured the band in the setting where they make most sense. Of course the sound quality had to

suffer and the sound here isn't great. But it's not bad enough to be unlistenable and, anyway, it's cheap.

If you've seen No Tag live it'll remind you of how exciting they can be. If you haven't, it'll give you some idea of what they're about.

No Tag have put themselves in an enviable position — if something irks them, they don't just moan about it, they write a song about it. In that way, they're lucky — they can do something. Sometimes, however, they abuse their position. 'Oi Oi' remains a singularly stupid thing to bleat, but that's what they do in the song 'No Tag'. You can hear the audience shouting it between songs too. It doesn't mean anything but it makes everyone feel better.

The blaming of nebulous 'bastards' in 'To Be' does not one any good either.

*The only way to have some fun. Is to rebel, to punch someone.* Punching people isn't rebellion, it's surrender.

But this is a good album, particularly *Side Two*. It's good to hear amphetamine guitars and a singer who doesn't want to be Frank Sinatra for a change. The lyrics often have a real, perceptive edge and they're personal, not just clichés.

## Little Steven and the Disciples of Soul Men Without Women EMI

*Men Without Women* marks Little Steven's solo debut. Otherwise known as 'Miami' Steve Van Zandt, he guided Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes through their first three albums and since 1976 has played guitar for the E-Street band.

The Disciples of Soul tag gives the lie to the music. Van Zandt is searching for the fever, the uplifting power of massed horns and guitars. That style, far from redundant, has found few sterling exponents in recent years other than Southside Johnny and Dexys in their soul rebel days. Van Zandt knows all the right moves and presents ten fine songs, but narrowly misses his mark.

For all the manifest strengths of the new songs, past glories are recalled by the horn bluster of 'Angel Eyes', the arrangement of 'Inside Of Me' and a host of Van

Zandt stylistic idiosyncrasies. The effect is to make this album the sequel to *Hearts Of Stone* (1978), the Jukes' and Van Zandt's best shot. And it's from that comparison that *Men Without Women* falters.

Van Zandt is no vocalist. His voice, akin to Dylan on sandpaper, lacks the depth and emotion essential to soul. These songs still work, particularly 'Forever' and 'I've Been Waiting', but a sympathetic voice like Southside Johnny's would have made that essential difference.

Little Steven is no blue-eyed Messiah and *Men Without Women* isn't soul salvation, but these brash, brassy songs are music as survival; determined, dedicated, honest. Some things just don't change.

David Taylor

## The Thompson Twins Quick Step and Side Kick Arista

The Thompson Twins have been kicking around Britain in various formats since the late seventies, the only constant factor and real motivating force being vocalist/synthesist Tom Bailey. In April of last year he took Joe Leeway, New Zealander Alannah Currie and his new ambition to write dance music and finally put the Thompson Twins in the charts.

*Quick Step and Side Kick* is the third TT album but it's the first to feature the three piece synthesiser pop approach. Recorded in the Bahamas under the auspices of producer Alex Sadkin, it is, regardless of denials from Alannah Currie in last month's *RIU*, an opportunistic album of Human League textures. But that's not a criticism, only a perspective.

The singles 'Lies' and 'Love On Your Side' together with 'Judy Do' and 'Love Lies Bleeding' are superior to the crafted syntho-pop genre that has become common place. Comfortably functional. 'Kamikaze' is the pick of the more sedate fare, melodic and atmospheric it rises above the dirge-like regrets of 'All Fall Down' and the silliness of 'We Are Detective'.

*Quick Step* makes no demands, it is what it appears to be — an album of unpretentious enjoyment, and that's okay every once in a while.

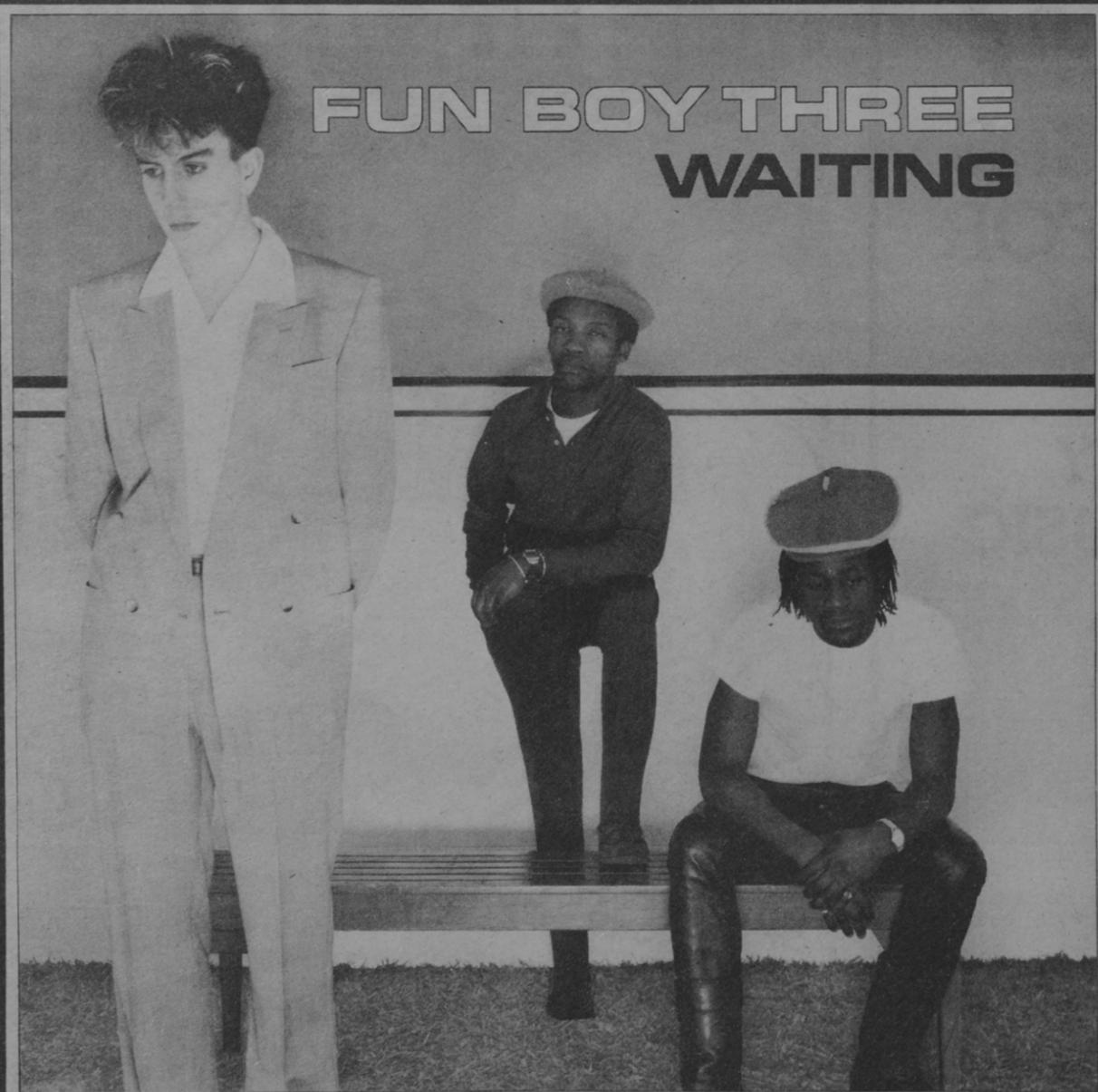
George Kay

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