

Records

Marianne Faithfull A Child's Adventure Island

The cover depicts child-like lettering and splotches of paint. Suggestions of innocence? The title is from a lyric line which reads in full:

Stop pretending this is a child's adventure.

Uh huh. This lady has lived one of rock's most publicly documented stories of decadence and dissipation. And let's admit it, part of the initial appeal of *Broken English* lay in its biographical associations. The rock verité approach persists. By *Dangerous Acquaintances* all the material was original, much of it self-penned.

This time out Faithfull has written or co-written six of the eight tracks. Her lyrics are filled with thoughts of fear, pain, despair, desire for escape, even paranoia. 'Ireland' seems to offer the only chance of refuge. The non-originals may be especially revealing. They not only contain repeated images of alcohol but serve to open and close the album. Barry Reynolds' 'Times Square' receives a fuller arrangement than on his recent LP, *I Scare Myself* — less plaintive perhaps but essentially similar. 'She's Got A Problem', the final number, has a narrator seemingly on the verge of drinking herself to death after a broken relationship.

Surprisingly, the music here is brighter overall than on either of its predecessors. Nassau reggae star (and co-producer) Wally Badarou contributes widely-ranging keyboard effects, many of them subtly delicate. Elsewhere acoustic guitar and brushed snare drum occasionally replace the more familiar rhythmic urgency. 'Morning Come' is probably as gently floating a piece as Faithfull has ever recorded.

As usual, the majority of tempos are medium paced and her voice, befitting the instrumentation, has lost much of its cawing rasp. The simple, repetitive melodies are as catchy as ever. Enhanced by the interesting arrangements they are probably also more durable. Marianne Faithfull no longer needs to trade on notoriety. *A Child's Adventure* can be recommended on its own merits. Peter Thomson

Tears for Fears The Hurting Mercury

Tears for Fears surfaced out of Bath last year. Curt Smith and Roland Orzabal de la Quintana have played together since they were 13. Both were members of Graduate, who had a minor hit a few years ago in Spain. As Tears for Fears they entered the studio with two songs 'Suffer the Children' and 'Pale Shelter'. Their producer at that time, David Lord, introduced them to synthesizers. The result was a contract with Phonogram and the release of both tracks as singles. 'Mad World', released here, is their third single.

On paper this is a success story. *The Hurting* has been in the British top five for several weeks. A new single, 'Change', has also done well. So all's Hunky Dory for Tears for Fears? Well, not quite. This album was recorded in double quick time and it shows. Sure, the four singles are all fine



Tears For Fears



Orchestra' Manoeuvres Andy McCluskey, Paul Humphreys.



Blancmange

pop tunes, particularly the sombre dance of 'Mad World', but four singles do not an album make.

The danger of record companies expecting albums out of new acts before the ink on the contract is dry is increasing. The market is now flooded with mediocre debut albums by bands who, given time, may have made good ones.

The Hurting is only an average record, but Curt and Roland are not to blame. If they are not forced to produce a second album before next year, their second effort should be a whole heap better.

Mark Phillips

Dexys Midnight Runners Geno EMI

This man was my bombers my dexys my high

The world they all hailed you and chanted your name.

Lyrics from 'Geno', Dexys' finest moment, which capture the importance of the band in 1981 when *Searching For the Young Soul Rebels* was released here. The promise soured with the disappointing Celtic venture, inspite of the successful 'Eileen' (itself, incidentally, a corruption of a traditional Celtic theme). This compilation of singles returns to the spirited sounds of 1979-1981, the band's golden period.

Alternative versions of 'Dance Stance' (better known as 'Burn It Down'), 'Keep It' and 'I'm Just Looking' are raw and impressive. Rowland sings with greater urgency, a feature made more effective by the slower pace. 'Geno', by contrast, appears unaltered and *There There My Dear* is presented only a tone lower.

'Plan B', with its helter-skelter horns quite unlike the *Too-Rye-Aye* model and 'The Horse', a fine if typical instrumental, also warrant close attention. For the rest, 'Breaking Down The Walls Of Heartache' is a sensible if not inspired cover, while 'One Way Love' lilt in insipid fashion and the closing instrumental, 'Soul Finger', is both repetitious and predictable.

Geno, while admittedly an album for Dexys addicts, is sufficiently strong in its own right to be worthy of investigation. These A and B-sides work well together, missing few beats and prove that Dexys once were soul rebels.

And now you're all over Your song is so tame.

David Taylor

Soft Cell The Art of Falling Apart Vertigo

Here's the record which should level most of the criticism aimed at Mark Almond and David Ball. The behind-the-bike-shed sleaze of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* has been replaced by something much more dangerous.

The emotions on display here are intensely personal. Everyday things take on a new and sometimes awful significance, from the workaday monotony of 'Forever The Same' to the valium-induced housewife fantasies of 'Kitchen Sink Drama'. Family life is dissected with savage irony in 'Where The Heart Is', the child caught in the middle as the parents fight, both the weapon and the victim.

'Numbers', the album's first single, is a deceptively light tune, as the protagonist (could be male or female) marks an inability to cope with a normal relationship by carrying on an endless string of one-night stands:

If you were any older you would have to pay, Well maybe you do, but you make out they pay you...

'Heat' continues the theme dispassionately, with the pain of self-realisation. 'Baby Doll' is the album's toughest moment, a horrorshow of pimping, drugs and degradation. 'Loving You, Hating Me' is the confusion of two close people, discovering things about each other they don't like and realising it's something each has to live with. The title track, which concludes the album, provides no relief. People break themselves either trying to attain the unattainable, or isolating themselves artificially from reality.

Falling Apart marks Soft Cell's emotional and, yes, physical maturity. From tortured adolescence to troubled manhood. Maybe Almond has a morbid obsession with decadence. Sometimes it's hard to tell whether he's a participant or an observer. You'll either be repelled or fascinated, but you won't be unimpressed. Like a tropical rain forest, Ball's lush synthetic orchestrations hide the smell of putrefaction beneath. It's no easy trip, but then nothing this honest could be. Disturbing and brilliant.

In Britain, there was a 12-inch single included with the album, featuring an old song called 'Martin' and a medley of Jimi Hendrix songs. Whatever happened to that?

Duncan Campbell

Men At Work Cargo CBS

The phenomenal success of the band's debut album, *Business As Usual*, is likely to be repeated with

Cargo, but largely in the slipstream of the original album. *Cargo* takes no risks and repeats the formula of *Business*.

'Dr Heckyll and Mr Jive' and 'Overkill', the two singles culled to date from the album are the highlights and only the latter matches the refreshingly glib pop that dominated *Business*. The consistency of the first album is abandoned, with such silly excesses as the inane 'Upstairs In My Room' or 'Settle Down My Boy', with its quasi-reggae rhythm. It's a Mistake' sounds catchy but we have already heard the tune in the guise of 'Be Good Johnny'.

Only on 'No Sign of Yesterday' does the band offer a clue that they may be about to break out of the comfortable torpor of commercial success. Very much more of the same from the new heroes of soft rock.

Renee Geyer Renee Live Mushroom

Anyone who has seen her perform knows that Renee Geyer is a great soul singer. If there have been occasional shortcomings in her shows they have usually lain with some of the backing musicians. This album, recorded soon after her tour here late last year, captures her in peak form and with an excellent band. Her voice is powerful and passionate with never a slip or strain — in other words as magnificent as ever. And the ten-piece support is everything one could ask for: the rhythm section solid, subtle when required, yet always full and punchy. The three-piece horn section provides perfect punctuation and the backing vocals are led by the wonderful Vanetta Fields.

Geyer's choice of material continues to be impeccable. Her rendition of the Meters' 'Look What You've Done' cuts Joe Cocker's recent version, while the beautiful 'Goin' Back' — sung in duet with Glenn Shorrock — stands alongside such classic interpretations as Dusty Springfield's or the Byrds'. Then there's the wonderful Kiwi-penned, Little Featish funk number on the flip of her last single.

Although three numbers are repeated from *So Lucky*, her last studio album, none suffer by comparison. Rather they appear afresh from the increased instrumentation. Even 'Say You Love Me', worn thin through radio over-exposure, regains its bounce and zest.

Recording quality throughout is very clear and the sound admirably rich. Renee Geyer's last live album (in '76) was very good. This one is better; in fact it is superb. It's also quite the best soul album by any female singer that this listener's heard in years.

Peter Thomson

Pink Floyd The Final Cut CBS

The Final Cut represents an important milestone for Pink Floyd in that the entire album is the product of Roger Waters. The album also marks the exit of keyboards player Rick Wright, which may well be related to the situation that the band exists merely as a vehicle for Waters' concepts.

To those who bought *The Wall* this album is likely to prove a disappointment. There are no anthems for youth here, but there are many epitaphs. Inspired by the Falklands crisis, Waters paints a grim picture of the follies of patriotism. The album is dedicated

to his father, a victim of the last war.

The Final Cut is an uncompromising album, an honest baring of the soul, mixing anger, both suppressed and unsuppressed, with a kind of sombre beauty. Lyrics intertwine with crescendos of orchestral power, provided by the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and savage assaults from Dave Gilmour's guitar. At times it fades into acoustic guitar with the words whispered in anguish.

There are no standout items — you accept the whole or you don't. A rewarding if difficult album which, by its very presentation will test the patience of Pink Floyd aficionados.

David Perkins

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark Dazzle Ships RTC

Since forming in 1978 OMD have experimented with a variety of styles within the limitations of a predominantly synthesiser orientated format. On this album they use computer technology to a far greater degree than they have previously, in accordance with the album's theme of modern technology and communications.

The influence of OMD's Teutonic counterparts, Kraftwerk, is at times blatantly evident. Time Zones' and 'ABC Auto Industry' in particular, with their use of radio time-bleeps and electronically simulated voices, could easily have been snatched from *Computer World* or *Radio Aktivat*.

This is not to say that the band has relinquished its distinctive sound in favour of smug computerised burblings devoid of human feeling. The album carefully balances out its cold mechanics with the captivating melodies and vocal harmonies characteristic of earlier albums. If you can ignore the obvious pretensions the end result is satisfying and engrossing.

Blancmange Happy Families Polydor

Two person electronic bands are fast becoming another musical institution, easy now to dismiss as pure pop with nagging synthesizers and earnest young lyrics saying what? Blancmange may fit this impending cliché, but *Happy Families* is a little more than a 40 minute, funky good time.

Blancmange use this dazzling new technology carefully, with neither sparkling glibness or mournful indulgence. They do seem to play the genre right down the middle, however. Sure, there's influences in the mix (David Byrne and Talking Heads spring to the ear) but nothing is too obtrusive. The pair, Neil Arthur and Stephen Luscombe, do bring a lot to the music themselves.

Duos do seem to have the space and focus to write good, tight songs. *Happy Families* has 10. There's pop — with the only local single so far, 'God's Kitchen'. There's funk — 'Feel Me' (watch out for the 12"). And then we have the other UK single 'Waves' and the dynamite dancefloor favourite 'Living On the Ceiling', complete with sitar licks and tablas.

As two bright young men playing electronics, Blancmange already have prejudice against them. This album won't hit people on their heads to change their minds. The word, no doubt, is insidious.

Mark Everton

BLANCMANGE

Happy Families

Includes "Living on the Ceiling" and "Waves"
Produced by Mike Howlett (Flock of Seagulls)
Featuring Maggie Bell and New Zealand's Joy Yates



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