

Records

Lou Reed Legendary Hearts RCA

Lou Reed's move away from tales of decadence and sensation to a rigorous exhumation of his past, which began in the early 70s and reaching a peak on *Growing Up in Public*, has borne fruit. The honesty he learnt to communicate is now being applied to his present.

Most of the eleven songs herein are frank, sometimes extremely painful, studies of his marriage, from the plea for more realistic expectations of true love in the title track through to a lucid celebration of the oases of idyllic peace most couples attain, however infrequently, in 'Rooftop Garden'. In between these opening and closing tracks things are harder, with jealousy, paranoia, insecurity, neurosis, violence and the inability to cope with any or all of the above, personalised and dissected. The remaining four songs are less specifically about Mr and Mrs Reed, covering exhaustion, addictions, American Indians and mental institutions, each in a simple, sincere fashion.

Does the music support the lyrics adequately? While Michael Fonfara was supplying a good proportion of the melodics and stuff over recent albums, this was a relevant question, but on *Hearts* Reed has written it all and played it with 3 other guys sounding at times a little like Doug Yule era Velvets. There is little overdubbing and his own guitar keeps things idiosyncratic. Direct songs, played directly, what more could you ask of him? Not a hell of a lot.

Chris Knox

Blitz Voice of a Generation Music World

This explosive debut must put an end to the myth that punk is dead once and for all.

Sorry, not a lot of art and not one love song — just hard-hitting, raw energy, from the power of 'Nation on fire' to the knockdown fury of 'Propaganda'. The name Blitz is certainly well chosen.

Blitz prove that punk still has many unexplored directions and on this 17 track document of their early sound it is interesting to note the obvious experimental leanings in some tracks.

Not convinced? Try putting this album on at your next party, stand back and watch the crowd go crazy. All in all, a well produced, furiously-paced punk package for the eighties. Grab it! Gerald Dwyer

Various Artists Pillows and Prayers Cherry Red

It would be ungracious to give this album a bad review because any label that is prepared to give you seventeen of its 'best' songs for \$2.99 has to be encouraged. If it contains even one song that you really like it has succeeded in getting that song to you for less than the price of a single. So good on you Cherry Red and Music World (NZ distributors).

The album's aptly named with the majority of tracks being less than hard-edged. Some are formless wimps, notably Five or Six, Thomas Leer (a shadow of his former self, apparently) and the



Marine Girls. Side One in particular has an easy-to-ignore feel.

Most interest is generated for me by the Monochrome Set, Ben Watt, the Passage and the Misunderstood (a sixties, psychedelic relic). I already had a fondness for Eyeless in Gaza, who are represented here by one of their less memorable songs and Kevin Coyne, who I hadn't heard for years and who contributes the album's best (if a trifle clichéd) tune.

Quentin Crisp closes the set with a typically scathing putdown of modern youth (circa 1956!) which none of the people involved in this project really deserve. Well, some of them, maybe.

Various Artists has never been my favourite group but this one can't lose on a value for money basis.

Chris Knox

King Trigger Screaming Chrysalis

King Trigger sound like a band still searching for an identity. This English four-piece spends its time thrashing about with numerous diverse styles and ends up displaying little more than blatant plagiarism.

The single, 'River', is at least vaguely memorable, in a Mitch Miller, singalongish way. For the rest, it's spot the source. 'Vodka': aimlessly Adam Ant. 'Lay Your Hands On Me': Gang Of Four did it better. 'Blood': Echo and the Bunnymen without the passion. 'Shut Up': Rip, Rig and Panic-style funk, with really ugly vocals. 'Temptation': Teardrop Explodes. I could go on, but it would waste space.

The songs have no discernable emotion, the lyrics are dry and meaningless. Sam Hodgkin doesn't do justice to an above-average voice, singing tripe like this. Producer Steve Lillywhite was obviously roped in to beef up the sound and compensate in some way for its lack of character.

King Trigger might as well change their name to Anonymous.

Duncan Campbell The Belle Stars Stiff

These days British pop seems to have once again become fixated

Lou Reed Belle Stars

with the quest for the hit single. It is also very much preoccupied with recycling the styles of past eras and anything remotely 'ethnic,' 'exotic,' or 'soulful' is at a premium. The Belle Stars' debut album could well prove this year's most typical English pop record.

Looked at one way it has a lot going for it. Of the 12 tracks, six are covers of choice oldies and 10 and one half sound like viable singles. The playing is all reasonably solid and the band do generate an undeniable neo-girly-pop good-humoured catchiness.

Taken as a whole, however, it's all a bit glib and insubstantial. The band seemingly just skims over the surface of the various styles represented by the songs in almost movie travelogue fashion. We start with 'Sign of the Times', a compilation of stock Motown arrangers' hooks, fly down to Rio for a touch of Latin with 'Ci Ya Ya' then back up to New Orleans for the Mardi Gras with 'Clapping Song'. And so on.

On balance it's at least a step up the evolutionary ladder from Bananarama or Soft Cell but for the same money you could get the Hulamen EP, the new Michael Jackson single and still have enough left to buy dinner.

Don Mackay

Joan Armatrading The Key A&M

Here she is with album number 10 (including her EP), number nine with A&M. The same honesty, the same humour, the same dazzling voice but a very different result. With Steve Lillywhite producing nine of the 11 tracks and Val Garay (Motels, Kim Carnes, etc) producing the other two this album is consistently punchier than anything she has put out previously.

In April 1982, Armatrading told *RIU* that she was writing much more on electric guitar. *The Key* is obviously the fruit of that writing. In fact, for those who are addicted to Armatrading's slow ballads, you'll have to hunt for them. But they're there and you'll find her playing acoustic on two pure gold tracks, 'Everybody Gotta Know' and 'I Love My Baby'.

Mostly she plays electric and performs one stunning solo on 'Tell Tale', a sassy number about getting your own back. She even makes her record debut as a pianist in 'The Dealer', where she sings powerfully about the destructive side of life. 'Drop the Pilot' is there of course, in all its glory with other melodic, attention-getting, foot-pounding tracks such as 'Call Me Names', 'Foolish Pride', 'The Key' and 'Bad Habits'.

And the rumour that she's about to embark on another world tour? Keep your ear to the ground — you'll hear her coming!

Maryann Street

Briefts

Mental As Anything Creatures of Leisure (Regular)

Album number four and the cracks are beginning to show, just a little. Not that this is a bad record. It's just that it gets the slightest bit dull and workmanlike, especially on Side Two.

Side One still has that old *joie de vivre* that made songs like 'Egypt' and most of the last album so essential. But for much of this album, I'm afraid the title of the first track sums it up: 'Spirit Got Lost'.

SG

Eddy Grant Killer on the Rampage (Ice)

After a lull in the seventies following his Equals' phase, Eddy Grant has recently built up a lasting credibility. Recorded at his own studio in Barbados, *Killer on the Rampage* is an excellent combination of Grant's reggae/pop background and his aptitude for commenting on social ills. 'Electric Avenue', 'War Party', 'It's All In You' and the title track are the highlights from an album with few blemishes.

GK

Climax Blues Band Sample and Hold (Virgin)

Veteran English rock band with their first album on the Virgin label. Of the original band only the nucleus of Cooper and Haycock remain but nothing is lost with the personnel changes in this, their strongest album in years. 'Sign of the Times', 'I'm Ready' and 'Movie Queen' are the standouts on this polished rock album. Highly recommended.

DP

Patrick Simmons, Arcade (Electra)

These days Patrick Simmons' status as longest-serving Doobie seems more musical milestone than milestone. But, considering the obvious point of comparison, this solo set is a moderately pleasant surprise. FM fodder it may be, yet Simmons — with expatriate Kiwi Chris Thompson as co-writer — has penned some catchy ditties, added suitably tasteful arrangements and employed the usual ultra-expensive sessionmen. Even a high-gloss rendition of an old Chi-lites classic doesn't completely swamp the originals.

PT

Def Leppard, Pyromania (Vertigo)

With a slightly more refined sound (thanks to 'Mutt' Lange) DL continue their arson-orientated trail on this third outing, still featuring the stunning twin guitars and thunderous rhythm section from the previous excellent *On Thru the Night* and *High and Dry* LPs (two of NZ's best kept HM secrets). If your tastes include Iron Maiden, Saxon, etc, you'll love this little gem. You may even hear it on Stereo FM with a bit of luck — that's how they broke in the States. I'm waiting in anticipation.

GC Michael Schenker Group Assault Attack (Chrysalis)

As the musical chairs approach to membership in British metal bands continues we find the lineup for this MSG album consisting of Graham Bonnett, Ted McKenna and Chris Glen. Since then, however, the band has changed personnel yet again and this lack of stability shows through on this mediocre album. There is no doubt Schenker is one of the most talented and melodic guitarists on the hard rock scene but the lacklustre material he's come up with here dulls the impact of his playing. Good but not great.

CC

UFO, Making Contact (Chrysalis) Tank, Power of the Hunger (Kamaflage)

On their twelfth album UFO continue their flirtation with an American FM-orientated style that commenced with *Mechanix* and apparently caused the departure of long-serving bassist Pete Way. Now a four piece, UFO still have a full hard rock sound (keyboards more to the fore on this one) that's always slick and reliable, but rarely exhilarating. Old school product: all technique and little inspiration.

Tank have the "let's get pissed and rock out" approach. Their second album is less of a Motorhead clone than the first. Rough and ready, fast and drunken, but hardly compelling. New school product: all enthusiasm and no finesse.

CC

Ric Ocasek, Beatitude (Geffen)

Because the band was always so decidedly his vehicle this album seems less a case of driving solo than simply varying the team. Although, considering his impressive work with Romeo Void (among others), one might have expected a somewhat tougher sound in the shift up to self-production. Instead it remains distinctly Cars: more dense perhaps, certainly darker overall, but that just makes those minimalist melodies all the more hypnotic when they hook. A pity it breaks down early into Side Two.

PT

Peter Tosh, Mama Africa (EMI)

Tosh's ego apparently lets him think he can release any kind of porridge and someone will buy it. While remaining ideologically sound, he kills every track with piles of unnecessary overdubs, obviously aimed at the soft underbelly of America. Only a couple of the songs survive this heavy-handed approach. His remake of 'Johnny B. Goode' is either a sick joke or a shot at a hit single.

DC

T-Bone Burnett Trap Door (Warner Bros)

Despite the name, T-Bone Burnett is far from blues. Maybe the name's a gag. The six songs on the 12-inch EP represent him as a less impassioned shadow of Mink DeVille. He delivers his material in a tone of hurt romanticism. The sound is crisp, pared down, but perhaps a little polite. Promising all the same.

KW

Elvis Presley All the Best From Elvis (Starcall)

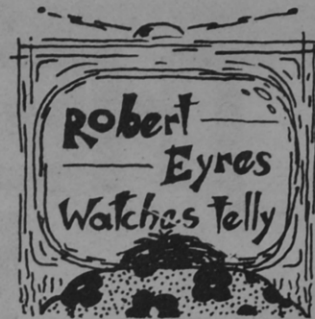
The title's a misnomer, of course. Any Elvis compilation that includes nothing from the early Sun sessions nor such later gems as 'My Baby Left Me' and 'If I Can Dream' is no best of in my book. Still, this collection touches most of the bases. It's a good overview of Elvis' career — that means it's got both the junk and the genius of the man: both 'American Trilogy' and 'Such A Night'. The definitive Elvis collection has yet to be devised but *All The Best* treads a fair line between Elvis' best-loved songs and his real best. The schlock and the essentials (or enough of them, anyway) are both here.

AD

Missing Persons Spring Session M (Capitol)

Terry Bozzio drummed for Zappa. His sister bunnied for *Playboy* and wanted a shot at singing. Together, in Hollywood, they formed Missing Persons. His playing is robust and vigorous. Her image is post-punk *Barbarella*. It's all so calculated. For about half the album it also works. A few tracks come on like 80s style early Blondie — pop trash with precision. A couple of others even recall the energy of late 70s English bands. The rest is awful.

PT



From time to time you hear people whinging about the record sales charts (for those of you over thirty, the 'hit parade') being a big swindle, ie subject to manipulation, chart hypes, etc. You actually hear less of this sort of thing than you used to, as a result of increasing hipness to the fact that these days most of the monkey business is carried out by our dearly beloved kiwi independents and after all who wants to cast nasturtiums at the very people whose parties they hope to be invited to. Which is all a bit beside the point since the subject of this month's exciting, and subliminally sensuous column is TV ratings.

Now here we have one of the most transparently fiddleable, pseudo measures of public taste ever perpetrated on an unsuspecting and therefore probably deserving, public. And yet no-one whinges. But consider for a moment the fact that you probably spend as many hours each week watching garbage on the tube as you do listening to garbage on commercial radio. And the prime time programming of so much garbage is justified by reference to the ratings. But looking from the other end of the equation. Prime time is called prime time because that is when most people will be watching and therefore whatever is on in prime time is going to rate pretty well. Regardless of what TVNZ chooses to screen at prime time the ratings will prove that it is what the public wants to see.

When last checked upon an especially witless Ocker soap called *Young Doctors* rated first, second, third, fourth and seventh most popular show for the week. This is a show we all watch because it is on at 6pm but wouldn't be bothered with at all if it was on at 10pm (and most of us would rather see something else at 6 anyway). But so long as it keeps topping the ratings we're stuck with it. So what can you do about it? Not a lot, unless you happen to be one of the chosen few who happen to be interviewed in the ratings survey. If you are then you can tell lies and pretend not to have watched things that you did watch but really know, deep down in the inner most recesses of your soul (whoops buzz-word), are a pile of shit. Even that may not have much effect but at least it should be fun, which is more than can be said for watching most of the prime time programmes.

TVNZ is rumoured to be starting a new local show. The concept (man!) is that people with unusual talents/experiences will perform or tell their tale (as appropriate) before a studio audience. The show is to be called *That's Quite Interesting Really*.

Robert Eyres

Inarticulate speech of the heart Van Morrison

Available on ..er ..um
..album and um..

I think, like you know
ah ..a cassette.