

Records

The Beat What Is Beat? The Best of the Beat Go Feet

It's only rarely that a band can change your outlook by influencing your heart, emotions and moods. The Beat were such a band. Along with the Specials they blended punk with ska to push the ideas of concern before compromise and principles before cash. It was the musical dignity and exhilaration of their first album that established them as a major force. Since then they have failed to recapture that initial explosive burst. But they grew in other ways.

What Is Beat? is not only a great greatest hits compilation but also a legitimate means of tracing the Beat's development over their three albums. Understandably, half of the album is drawn from *I Just Can't Stop It* and the songs concerned sound fresher than ever. It's worth noting that the 'Can't Get Used To Losing You' version is the remixed single cut that is currently charting, as is 'Stand Down Margaret'.

Wha'ppen and *Special Beat Service* disappointed those who expected a rerun of the debut, but repetition would have been futile especially in the face of the band's growing social concern and Wakeling's belief that the first album was too fast to dance to anyway. Whatever, the albums were less commercially successful and consequently only 'Doors of Your Heart', 'Save It For Later', the brilliant 'I Confess', 'Drowning' and 'Ackee 1-2-3' have made it on to *What Is Beat?*

And there are added bonuses. There's the inclusion of their spritely first single cover of 'Tears of A Clown' and its flip, the live card, 'Rankin' Full Stop' as well as 'Too Nice To Talk To', not available on any of their albums. But the real bonus is the free dub album that comes with the first five hundred copies of *What Is*



Alison Moyet, Yazoo.



Howard Devoto



Madness

Beat? It features superb remixed interpretations of 'Twist and Crawl', 'Doors of Your Heart' and 'I Confess' as well as interesting re-readings of 'Psychedelic Rockers', 'Drowning' and 'Too Nice To Talk To'.

What Is Beat? The answer is in these grooves.

George Kay

Yazoo

You and Me Both Mute

With *You and Me Both* Yazoo seamlessly take synthesizer pop another leap forward. A finely crafted work, this album is at once sad and warm, sorrowful and defiant. The cohesion between the economic electronics of Vince Clarke and the voice of Alison Moyet binds this album into a work of great clarity. By stripping away at the indulgences of their musical genre Yazoo provide a precise state of synthesizer art.

This is apparently the pair's last work together. The tunes are sharp and snappy in the style of the first album, *Upstairs at Eric's*, but gone is the calculated dance-

floor persuasion. In its place, a much more personal look at life, love and especially loss. Songs such as the first single 'Nobody's Diary', 'Softly Over', 'Mr Blue' and 'Anyone' are simply sad. All the right words apply – haunting, aching, mesmerising. Throughout the album, but especially on those songs, Clark's virtuosity shines. His simple use of space, layers and rhythms show him to be a master craftsman from whom we can expect much more. Meantime Moyet's 'Ode to Boy', an observation of infatuation, is my personal favourite on the record and will ensure her breathless voice receives an eager ear in future endeavours.

Perhaps because the slow, sustained songs are so good, I find the up-tempo ones a little insubstantial. 'Sweet Thing', 'Good Times' and 'Walk Away from Love' are all a mite too dial-a-hook. Heard in isolation on the dancefloor though, they would doubtless work. Clarke also goes into previously untouched politicising on 'Unmarked' and 'Happy People'. While they fit the feel of the album

musically, the sentiment is rather forced by comparison. Maybe next time.

An honest album of beauty and emotion. If Vince and Alf ever find other partners to work with so well, watch out.
Mark Everton

Tom Tom Club Close To the Bone WEA

The gap between the durable and the disposable can be slim. Two years ago when Talking Heads' rhythm duo Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth and friends released the bubbly novelty funk of 'Wordy Rappinghood' and 'Genius of Love', they slipped into a breach of pessimism with some welcome light relief. And they were welcomed with open arms.

But two years have passed and with their second album, *Close To the Bone* at hand, it's hard to see what all the fuss was about. In sticking to the same kiddies-having-fun-in-the-Bahamas appeal, *Close To the Bone* only reinforces the twee disposability and impermanence of the ideas behind their music.

Songs like 'This Is A Foxy World', 'Bamboo Town' and 'Never Took A Penny', like Finn's 'Friction', have an immediacy and shallowness that defies durability. Only 'The Pleasure of Love' and 'The Man With the 4-Way Hips' hint that the sweet could have a hard centre.

Otherwise let's be thankful that the Tom Tom Club is only a holiday band and that Frantz and Weymouth are doing real and lasting work elsewhere.

George Kay

Howard Devoto

Jerky Versions of the Dream Virgin

Since the demise of Magazine, Howard Devoto and his companions Dave Formula and Barry Adamson have maintained a mysterious silence. Devoto declined interviews and buried himself in work which has only now reached fruition. *Jerky Versions of the Dream* is the result and it deserves close scrutiny.

Whether Devoto is the confident artiste he appears to be is debatable. His sound has changed

little since Magazine, probably because of the continued presence of Dave Formula's keyboards.

The first four songs are bright – immediate, even. They feature sparkling piano and choir-like backing vocals. 'I Admire You' is almost a single, while 'Topless', a Formula/Devoto composition is awkward funk with ravaged guitar and handclaps.

Around the middle, 'Some Will Pay (For What Others Pay to Avoid)' things slow down. Leisure Process' saxman Gary Barnacle provides the perfect uneasy balance for Formula's manicured melody. 'Out of Shape With Me' is a serene but slovenly sleaze with Howard on guitar and Barry Adamson on bass. Also featured are the French horn and trumpet of Andy Diagram.

The finale, 'Seeing Is Believing' is pure Magazine, not surprising when you discover the only three involved are Devoto, Formula and Adamson.

If you're expecting something drastically different from this album – don't. It is a record that will gradually grab your attention, eventually securing it. Devoto may call it his solo album, it could just as easily be the new edition.
Mark Phillips

Madness

The Rise and Fall Stiff

A sense of the absurd and a penchant for the dance put Madness on the musical map. Their stylish videos and a string of strong singles (available as *Complete Madness*) hinted at something more than fad-art. This album, mysteriously delayed in its antipodean release, confirms that Madness are a band of moment, rational and purposeful.

The Rise and Fall comprises 13 pensive slices of life. These songs aren't bravura youth anthems, their message is not jolly. English urban life is grey: Tomorrow's just another day; social activity is limited to drinking and the tele ('Blue Skinned Beast'); existence is fraught with difficulties and rapid change ('Our House', 'Tiptoes', 'That Face', 'Madness...'), and more.

The music still has a nutty flavour with goodtime piano, jerky rhythms and brass blasts but

the party-up hysteria of earlier releases is absent. Finely crafted, yet still danceable, these songs are stark, possessed of an insidious and somewhat disturbing appeal. And the crisp Langer/Winstanley production serves to make that appeal timeless.

Rise and Fall is robust and challenging. If the Specials' 'Ghost Town' captured the essence of Thatcher's England, this album describes the every-day drudgery of a working life in the immediate past and foreseeable future.

Madness have moved many steps beyond the looney tunes that established their reputation. *Rise and Fall*, quite simply, is monumental. Consistent, eerie and their best effort yet.

David Taylor

Robert Plant The Principle of Moments WEA

Last year's *Pictures At Eleven* was a fine comeback for Plant; working with new musicians yet creating an aura of power reminiscent of Zeppelin firing on all cylinders. Unfortunately his new offering fails to capture the excitement of its predecessor.

The problems seem to lie with his determination to cut loose from his background and establish a distinctive Plant sound as against a thinly disguised version of Zeppelin. The result is largely a series of overplanned mid-tempo rock numbers with the odd hang-over from the past and a glimpse of better things to come. 'Other Arms' opens where *Pictures* left off. 'Big Log', featuring a magnificent, simmering guitar solo from Robbie Blunt and poignant lyrics and delivery from Plant points to the future. Inbetween, the songs become weighed down with keyboard gimmicks and too much stop and start. Plant's greatest asset, his inimitable voice, is so restrained the band just limps along. An exception is 'Reckless Love', which, while restrained, evokes real passion, aided by imaginative drumming from Barriemore Barlow (Phil Collins drums on most tracks).

A disappointing album in the context of *Pictures*. The lyrics represent a step forward but what are words when the music falters?
David Perkins

CALL OF THE WEST

WALL OF VOODOO

FEATURES THE SINGLE
'MEXICAN RADIO'

AVAILABLE ON ALBUM & CASSETTE

BILLY JOEL

AN INNOCENT MAN

Billy Joel said of this album
"I decided beforehand
to have as much fun as
I could."

FEATURES THE HIT SINGLE
'TELL HER ABOUT IT'

AVAILABLE ON ALBUM & CASSETTE