

Records

Tracey Thorne A Distant Shore Cherry Red

A distant shore. You're sitting on a bare beach under a winter grey sky. The holiday township behind you is in narrow hibernation, the people won't bother you. The odd flash of colour from a piece of festive litter echoes the hues and bustle of summer, laughter, crowds ... and that boy/girl. You're lonely, but there's a beauty in the solitude.

That's the feel and Tracey Thorne doesn't stray far from it. Eight wistful, retrospective songs, all with the same dreamy vocals and slightly edgy acoustic guitar. The standard of the lyrics is high — at least a couple of lines in each song strike home, if softly. They're mostly about relationships, sad but not desolate. If this all sounds a bit like Leonard Cohen then perhaps you're twigging something.

The cover of the Velvet Underground's 'Femme Fatale' is surprisingly good — certainly much better than Thorne's sometime

band the Marine Girls' (she is also half of Everything But the Girl) dreary rendition of 'Fever'. This record displays more cohesion and purpose than Marine Girls recordings, in fact, Thorne has defined herself almost too well. The image holds for an album's length but whether it will escape repetition and self-parody in future remains to be seen. As for the record, it's sad, soft and beautiful and I listen to it alone.

It almost makes you wish for a broken heart.
Russell Brown

Various Artists Voices of the Angels Freeway Records

It's a good idea to document the city in poems, etc. It's a worthy project but by the sounds of this two-hour marathon spoken word collage, LA's a fucking disturbing city. With some exceptions, these people sound bland and hollow but what else would ya expect? Here's a poem for ya:

*Self-infatuated white boys
Thrust their erect egos into echo chambers*

*Riding the sperm-drenched surf
From Malibu to San Fernando Valley*

Short-term memories frying in the heat

*Of acidic yesterdays
While clones of Beefheart
Growl like naugahyde blaaaaack men*

*And barbed-wire dolls
Bath on vinyl bar stools*

I wrote that! Wow man! And I ain't even been to LA. But I heard the rekkid maaaaan. An' you can too. Write to Harvey Kubernik, c/- Freeway Records, Box 679300, LA, California, 90067, USA. If ya wanna bask under the black sun with poetry drizzling out ya gills. Chris Knox

AC/DC Flick of the Switch Alberts

Whilst never reaching the classic status of *Back in Black*, this self-produced album still delivers in no uncertain terms. No frills, hard as nails, AC/DC prove they still have it over virtually all comers in quality skull-crushing rock.

Like Texans ZZ Top, AC/DC have developed an awesome and rewarding understanding of pace and power. Brian Johnson's screaming vocals and Angus Young's ringing guitar are throughout underpinned by the peerless Rudd/Williams engine room to create an album that starts hesitantly on both sides and builds to two frenzied rockers in

'Landslide' and 'Brain Shake', their fastest numbers since TNT's 'I'm A Rocker'.

Highlights include the title track and the magnificent 'Nervous Shakedown', which ranks with the very best of AC/DC's output. So, yet another great AC/DC album. **PLAY IT LOUD!**

Chris Caddick

The Coconuts Don't Take My Coconuts EMI

The sun on your shoulder. The Coconuts on the stereo. Tap your toes, and think about going to the beach. Close your eyes and reach for the champagne. Damn it's flat, just like the record.

The Coconuts step out from behind Kid Creole on this set. August doesn't let them get too far though, producing, writing half the songs and taking lead vocal on the title track. The music is pretty much the Ha Cha Cha style we got down to with *Tropical Gangsters* this time last year. Except where that cocktail mix produced nectarine daiquiris like 'Stool Pigeon' this latest effort is generally warm beer.

This is goodtime music, as light as a summer breeze. The three Coconuts obviously enjoy themselves especially on the pseudo-

German decadence numbers where they get to coo in with a huge, and I mean big, orchestra known as Pond Life.

If you're looking to summerise your record collection this could be a start. But Mr Darnell should really spend less time out in the sun himself if he wants anything more than a languid response in future.

Mark Everton

Paul Carrack Suburban Voodoo Epic

With this Nick Lowe-produced album, keyboard player and singer Carrack (singer with Ace and Squeeze, keyboards for Roxy Music and others) has handed down an impressive debut.

Its potent mixture of pop and R&B is a clever updating of the Motown sound. There are few direct steals from that source — rather, the stylistic debt is in the details: the handclaps, the gospel piano playing, the song structures and the witty lyrics which echo Stanley Robinson.

The album's only major failing is in its thinness, both in sound and intent. Not only has Lowe reduced Carrack's voice to a reedy squeak rather than the full-throated instrument it is, but there is no performance as moving as the one Carrack achieved on Squeeze's 'Tempted'.

Still, this is the strongest British R&B in some time and a worthy follow-on from Elvis, Nick and Graham.

Alastair Dougal

Briefs

Twisted Sister
You Can't Stop Rock 'n' Roll
(Atlantic)

Dio, Holy Diver (Mercury)

Two examples of trans-Atlantic success. Twisted Sister, unknown in their native America, hit it big

in Britain and Dio, comprising two yanks and two limeys, come up trumps with their first album.

For Twisted Sister, hard-slog gigging has reaped both live and vinyl success. Their glam-rock, sub-metal boogie has struck the right chord of escapism for Brit-teens with the dole queue blues. The band provides raunchy backing for Dee Snider's chant-along anthems like 'I Am (I'm Me)', 'I've Had Enough', and the video gem title track. Danceable, singable and, above all, fun.

Meanwhile, back in the incestuous world of heavy metal's old boys, former Elf, Rainbow and Sabbath vocalist Ronnie James Dio has formed his own band with Vinnie Appice (ex Sabbath) and Jimmy Bain (Rainbow, Wild Horses) and newcomer guitarist Vivian Campbell. Freed from the restraints of Iommi and Butler, Dio's fired up a little beauty here: strident, powerful crunch rock, traditional metal at its very best.

Kissing The Pink
Naked (Magnet)

A proficient and often clever debut album where a mish-mash of styles (from the pseudo-militarism of 'The Last Film' to the chiming pop of 'Mr Blunt') blur the band's identity. This shows in the absence of an edge to the music and a certain lack of conviction in the performances. Kissing The Pink need to cloak their nudity in a definite style.

Gram Parsons
and the Fallen Angels
Live 1973, (Music World)

Now here's an event and a surprise. Ten years after Gram Parsons' death comes the release of this album. Recorded in 1973 in the studio of a Long Island radio station before an audience of 50, this album catches Gram (and Emmylou Harris) without the stellar crew used on his studio albums but fronting a very solid and capable group of (mostly) unknowns. The recording and pressing may be a tad rough but the good feeling and spirit of the session is more than intact. Essential for the converted and highly recommended to all others. AD



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