

# Records

Pete Shelley  
XL 1  
Island

The suspicious minded and the purists will probably have given up on the career of Pete Shelley. He sure seems like a million miles from the punk purity of his Buzzcocks' origins on the likes of last year's *Homosapien* and now *XL 1* — yet his fragile wandering soul is still intact, it's just that he's using different methods of conveying its pains and needs.

The approach of *XL 1*, complete with computer programme instructions for the ZX Home Computer (not exactly a humble or down-to-earth approach on Shelley's part), has gained from the two year gap since *Homosapien*. His tentative and timid approach to keyboards has been replaced by a confidence and aggression that is pretty evident. He's also filled out the album with some orthodox musicians in the likes of ex Magazine bassist Barry Adamson and Shelley himself

adds various guitar parts.

The end result is a body of songs that can't be ignored: 'You Know Better Than I Know', 'I Just Wanna Touch', the Buzzcocks' propulsion of 'No One Like You' and 'Many A Time' can stand beside the best he's ever done. 'Telephone Operator' and 'What Was Heaven' are also worth noting, the former appearing with 'Homosapien' as a bonus 12" with extended dub versions.

*XL 1* has been one of the few surprises of the year, and it's much more than pleasant.  
George Kay

Southern Death Cult  
Virgin

Southern Death Cult were quaint, visually appealing, but ultimately crap. Carried on a staggeringly misdirected wave of "new punk" hype, these feisty little pretenders achieved quicky commercial success with singles like 'Moya' and 'Fat Man' (which appear on the album) and then dissolved.

This album could be seen as a legacy of sorts, featuring live and studio tracks which show off admirably the group as a great bunch of no-talent schmucks. It goes something like this: pummel pummel, thud thud, tweek tweek.

The problem with SDC was that they lacked a truly *fuck you!* sound. Instead they sound like an unhealthy hybrid of U2, Birthday Party and Kirk Brandon.

Only on 'Faith' (a live track) and 'Apache' do things rise above the mundane. Everything else merely swerves towards the superficial and decorous. If you are an aural masochist and savour the full and utmost delights of unabashed tedium then this, my friends, is the record for you.  
S. J. Townshend

Alan Vega  
Saturn Strip  
WEA

Fuck this album! I thought I really liked it after four hearings but another listen later and I loathe the thing. So, patient reader with only \$11.99 to spend on records this month and maybe thinking of buying this one, should I make Mr and Mrs WEA happy and recommend you plunge your precious pennies into it?

No, I should not, because: (1) six of the nine songs boast the most boring rhythm section since man first spread sabre-tooth hide over hollow log. (2) Rick Ocasek produced it and plays on every track. Yes, yes I know he produced a Suicide album or two but Martin Rev wielded some heavy influence on the way they turned out. (One song, 'Wipeout Beat', has that good old nauseous Cars synth setting we all remember with revulsion.) (3) The songs shuffle between the sweet, rancid rockabilly of Vega's first solo (a far superior album) and the more satin sounds on the second Suicide album (maybe the title was misspelt) without capturing the joy of one or the strength of the other. (4) It includes a cover of a great song, 'Everyone's A Winner' by Hot Chocolate and crushes it... to no apparent purpose. Mind you, he's had a bit of difficulty with other people's good songs, from Suicide's 'Sister Ray' to *Collision Drive's* 'Be Bop A Lu La'. (5) Not content with aping Lou Reed, he's now stealing licks from Iggy and fellow V.U. freak Jonathan

Richman, with the keyboard phrase on 'Je T'Adore' being the most blatant example.

But, dear record buyer, it's harmless enough stuff, it won't stunt your growth or give you herpes and nor will it make you the teensiest bit unsettled. Which, coming from the guy who gave us 'Viet Vet', 'Lonely' and all the human noises of Suicide, is disappointing. You're allowed a couple of disappointments in a musical career, so ... maybe next time.  
Chris Knox

The Gun Club  
Miami  
Chrysalis

X  
More Fun In The New World  
Elektra

In a year that has been propped-up by the established talents of the likes of Costello, the Undertones, Talking Heads and Van Morrison, more people are turning their hopes towards the American alternative of Violent Femmes, the Plimsouls, REM and the Gun Club for some sort of new future.

X, of course, are too old to be part of this bright new world. They've been around in Los Angeles since the late 70s pushing their own brand of literate, considerate punk. Their first two albums on Slash records made your favourite critic's top ten list but that was as far as they went. Last year's major Elektra release, *Under the Big Black Sun*, had some fine songs but Ray Manzarek's production failed to bestow it with the required passion.

To some extent the reverse is true of *More Fun In the New World*. Manzarek has roughed the sound up a little, the guitars are fuller and the impact is fatter, but the songs seldom rise above the forgettable. 'We're Having Much More Fun', 'Poor Girl', 'Make the Music Go Bang' and 'True Love' are the best from a band who have about as much aural authenticity as Mental As Anything.

The Gun Club have been released in reverse over here. Earlier

this year disappointments had to be coped with on the arrival of their puny *Death Party* EP. The Texas Rangers struck out, or so it seemed until the arrival of their second album, *Miami*, their first collaboration with Chris Stein on his Animal label.

It hasn't got the raw punk guts of their 1981 Slash debut, *Fire of Love*, but it has got better songs so you can tolerate Chris Stein's less than dynamic production. 'Carry Home' is a sure balance of melancholy and drive and their cover of Fogarty's 'Run Through The Jungle' is monumental, but it's the forlorn country-longing of 'Mother of Earth' that will haunt you.

The rest of the album is almost as good.  
George Kay

Joe Jackson  
Mike's Murder  
A & M

Dammit, I was hoping for a live album of that excellent show he brought here in April. *Mike's Murder* is the title of a recent American movie (which apparently has flopped, so it may not reach NZ). A pity — Debra Winger was in it.) Jackson's soundtrack presents five new songs and some mood music.

The songs, all on Side One, are typical of the not-quite-inspired competence that made up the bulk of his last album. You know, all those catchy tunes labouring under Jackson's chafing vocals, plinky piano and cocktail lounge arrangements. Still, *Night And Day* did include the superb 'Stepping Out'. The poppiest this set presents is something called 'Memphis' wherein Steve Winwood's old 'I'm A Man' organ riff meets the B52s' rhythm section. There is an attractive ballad, however — even if it does get recycled as an instrumental — and after a few hearings, 'Moonlight' becomes quite as seductive as the last album's slow 'Breaking Us In Two'.

The flipside of *Mike's Murder* contains three instrumental themes, all of which are modestly successful given their obvious functional

limitations. The brooding jazz-funk of 'Zemio' even sustains eleven minutes. But finally one judges the album as pleasantly agreeable or slightly frustrating, depending whether your expectations are based on movie soundtracks or Joe Jackson. Me? I've been playing it alternately with *Look Sharp*. Now, about that live album idea ...  
Peter Thomson

Mi-Sex  
Where Do They Go?  
CBS

A more appropriate title would be 'What Happened To Them?' After a mediocre third album and a hint of flagging inspiration, most were ready to consign Mi-Sex to the archives and the second-hand bins, me included.

This band has come back with a mature and decisive album, knocking many of the criticisms levelled at them on the cranium. Drummer Richard Hodgkinson has been replaced by Paul Dunningham (ex Coup D'Etat), and another guitarist has been added, in the form of Colin Bayley (ex Short Story).

Mi-Sex have enlisted ace American producer Bob Clearmountain to do the honours. The result is an album with oodles of bounce and sparkle. Steve Gilpin's vocals are less forced, he now uses his limited range to better advantage, not trying to sound like an old punk.

And Mi-Sex have songs in plenty, too. Gilpin surpasses himself on the anguished love songs 'Blue Day' and 'Why Did You Leave'. 'Antipodes Army' could become a new anthem, with its bitter but poignant view of the South Pacific paradise. 'Don't Look Back In Anger' and '5 O'Clock (In The Morning)' are both prime examples of the band's newfound inspiration, free of the bombast that once threatened to engulf them.

Mi-Sex no longer sound like grown men trying to be kids. They use their experience to best advantage, wearing their years more gracefully, and giving everyone a lesson in the art of survival.  
Duncan Campbell

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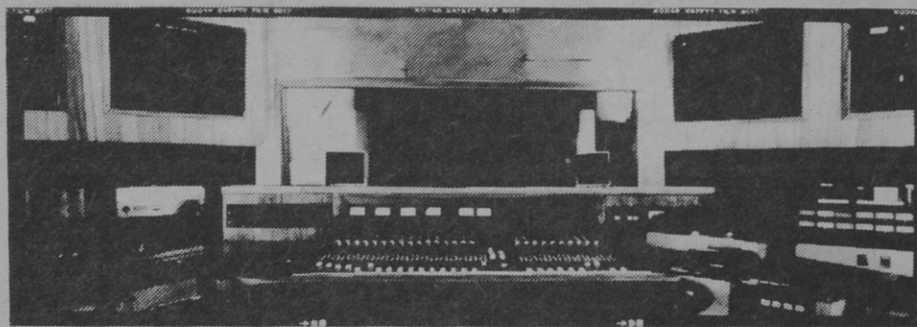
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