



Lil 1/2 Dead

GF4 Sooner or Later

Sooner or later it had to happen — this CD is interactive! Shame I don't have a CD-Rom, or I could tell you what the 'Interactive Media Experience' is. The music isn't much. Fast driving pop beat with a Bananarama-style vocal over the top. This is very 80s. Which was fine in the 80s, but its the 90s now.

HEAVY D AND THE BOYZ Black Coffee

Black coffee, no sugar, no cream... that's the kind of girl D needs down with his team. Believe it or not, this is a rap about how black men should fancy black women. Heavy D's lyrics are fairly lightweight — the standard 'African Queen' stuff — but the production, courtesy of Easy Mo Bee and Pete Rock, is smooth indeed. It rolls along in a variety of mixes, but who did what, the sleeve doesn't say. (I still prefer the LP version).

PROPHETS OF DA CITY Never Again.

The song opens with a speech by Nelson Mandela: "Never again..." Malcolm McLaren may have ripped off Soweto a decade ago, but POC are taking it all back for South Africa's hip-hop nation. Despite the cover art, this isn't

very hardcore, more a South African version of "free at last, free at last", but the trio have definitely got skills. A nice phat beat with a good lyrical flow.

VARIOUS ARTISTS A Life In The Year of Deconstruction (Volume III)

If you drool in envy at the 12" remixes Simon Grigg reviews each month (always wondering: 'How can I afford that shit?'), then this is for you. Eleven tracks, 75 minutes in all, from the masters of British funk: the Deconstruction record label. This compilation sums up many of their recent dancefloor hits over the last few months for M People, The Grid, Millionaire Hippies and K-Klass. This is an album you won't get tired of in a hurry, assuming your taste goes beyond the 3'30" radio pop hits most compilations are made of. Full-on dance mixes, including some remixes not previously available.

THE CONSCIOUS DAUGHTERS Ear To The Street

They've got plenty of attitude, but this aint no hoes with attitude type, female rap. Growing up in the hood, TCD have clearly decided enough is enough and they ain't tak-

ing no shit no more. No more acting as maids for their boyfriends, no more sex without condoms 'cause baby don't like it that way, no more sitting at the back of the bus. If that sounds overly preachy don't be put off — it's not. TCD deliver their message ghetto style, over the top of some extremely phat production from Paris. Stand out track has to be 'Shitty Situation', a tale about the reality of getting pregnant and deciding to keep the baby, closely followed by 'What's A Girl To Do' and 'Wife Of A Gangsta'. The latter is an account of the women who ride with the Gs and the price they pay. Not a dud track on the whole album.

LIL 1/2 DEAD The End Has Arisen

Coming straight outta long Beach, Lil 1/2 Dead is the younger brother of Big 1/2 Dead, who is now Big Completely Dead, and to whom this album is dedicated. Part of Snoop's Dogg Pound posse, Dead has the same lyrical flow and phat P-funk beats of his compatriots. His rhyme skills are excellent, but the sound is starting to get a little 'samey' now that everyone's on the same tip. I did snap to attention with 'Play 'Em or Spray 'Em' though. It's a really funny piss-take on radio talent call-ins. 'Dead Men Can't Rap' is a funky account of how his brother died in a turf war, and also a warning to all OGs that the BGs are taking over. [BGs are Baby Gangstas — the kids who used to run around fronting drug deals for the older Original Gangstas.]

VARIOUS ARTISTS Street Fighter (Movie Soundtrack)

While most media attention is focussed on which movie is doing the biggest box office, those numbers are just a drop in the bucket compared with the madd dollars Sega and Nintendo make each year selling video games. With such a vast, hitherto untapped audience out there, it's no wonder rappers like Ice Cube, Chuck D, Paris, and LL Cool J want a piece of the action. All songs are about the street, fighting, or street fighting. Sure, some are a little lame, but with the exception of the last two non-rap efforts on the album, this is a good enough compilation. But who's dumb idea was it not to put Kylie on?

DON JAGWARR Faded

Another of Ice Cube's boys, Jagwarr got his first shot performing on Cube's 'Wicked' single. Now (with a variety of producers, including QD III, Laylaw & D-Maq, and Brian G), Jagwarr makes his own play. The album opens with a live intro from Ice Cube, and then it's straight into 'Bad Boy', co-written and performed by Cube also. Clearly, Cube wants his boy to do well. Also guesting is Tupac Shakur, on 'Skank Wit' U', and Don Gotti. Jagwarr's thick, ragga voice sounds great, particularly when he goes pop on 'The Cure' (sampling The Supremes' Love Hangover) and R.E.S.P.E.C.T., which is sublime (thanks to a loop from Float On by The Floaters). Trivia note: Jagwarr is one of Cube's, boys yet on the sleeve notes he gives out props to Easy E!

IMMATURE Playtime Is Over

The trouble with being 'teen sensations' (as they're referred to on the cover) is that when you grow up the masses don't love you no more (case in point: Kriss Kross, Tevin Campbell, New Edition — sure, they continued to have hits, but it was all downhill). Immature's problem is that they don't even have a body of hits behind them yet to justify the "we ain't kids no more" stance they're taking here. Besides, their balls aint even dropped yet and they still sing like girls. They look like girls too, having gone for the androgynous look in their video and on their album cover. That said, you can't take away from the fact that they sound as good as any of the 'girl groups' currently riding high in the charts. Like Jade, Brandy, and Aliyah, Immature are blessed with fine voices, lush production, and some good songs.

CJ LEWIS Best Of My Love

Hey, last month I said this was originally done by the Flowers and no-one noticed! Duh. Flowers was actually the follow-up single to 'Best Of My Love', by The Emotions. (And Flowers was also the original name of the band Icehouse)

NICK D'ANGELO

HIP-HOP CORNERED

THE NOTORIOUS BIG Ready To Die (Bad Boy)

By rights Biggie Smalls should be in jail for a long time. He is a criminal, turned father, turned rapper. Another install went on the Bad Boy roster. Produced by a host of producers including DJ Premiere, who makes the beat of the LP on a track called 'Unbelievable'. Biggie has an exceptional ability to explain a situation, the words he chooses aren't new but he twists them. The beginning of the CD starts with a musical history of his life. Funk while being born, MC Shan while he and his boys rob a train, and finally Snoop Dogg when he leaves jail and tells the prison officer: 'I got big plans nigga'.

Mr Big is a sexist, pistol toting gangster, who makes no apologies and just tells it like he sees it. 'My Bitch' is actually a well written love song (once you get past the 'me and my bitch' chorus). Biggie has a classic fat rapper's voice. His lyrics are reality and unfancy, no gimmicks — not afraid to say muthafucka, but not afraid to cry. The single 'Juicy' is an in-tune remake with fatter drums.

On the whole the lyrics are full of struggle ('Everyday Struggle') and inbred depression and abandonment. Plenty are the 'I don't give a fuck' kind ('Ready to Die'). WuTang Clan's method man makes an appearance on 'The What'. Gangster rap from New York. High body count, high skill level. 'I got techniques dripping out my arse cheeks, sleep on my stomach so I don't fuck up my sheets' — Biggie Smalls.

PARIS Guerrilla Funk (Scarface)

This album is a classic — classic comeback for a rapper who really never blew up. Paris has a lot of important things to say — if you can listen to some dude preaching at you, song after song. So I guess he figured his militant drums and sinister samples wouldn't sell, so he came back with the 'G Funk' like every other wannabe New Jack. I swear the opening track 'It's Real' has the same bassline and hooks as 'What's My Name' by Snoop Dogg. The CD just rolls along with Paris teaching me to put out my joint and leave the beer alone. He tells me things are fucked but, apart from 'Give Each Other Love', has no solutions. I like how Paris hasn't let up with his staunch attitude but his beats are a mockery! Conscious Daughters guest on 'Black and Blue', but there is nothing redeeming at all about *Guerrilla Funk*. Stink beats.

DIGABLE PLANETS Blow Out Comb (Pendulum Records)

Blow Out Comb is the follow up to the cross over success *Rebirth Of Slick*. It's a classic second album, twice as good. The jazz theme is used again, but the samples aren't as sparse, more 'looped' with abstract drum sequences. Gone are the insect names they used to use and the lyrics about coming from other planets. Instead they talk about the basics: blocks, crew and beats. This is a mellow LP — my girlfriend likes it. The first single, 'Ninth Wonder', is indeed aptly named — the best drum pattern I've heard in a long time. 'Borough Check' is a homage to Brooklyn, with Guru from Gangstarr guesting, and 'Graffiti' features Jeru the Lamaja. I didn't press skip on the CD once. If you are looking for a smooth, jazz fusion album for your dinner party, this is it, or, if you want an original rap record with refreshing rhymes for your walkman, this is also it. Classical.

OLI GREEN

WHAT THE



IS FUDGE?

