

# albums



These Animal Men

the flow of the album. *Circular Temple* is jazz piano that owes as much to Cecil Taylor and Charles Ives as it does to Monk, and that's a wonderful thing.

Staying in a jazzy vein is the Contortions, *Buy the Contortions*. The musical trip here was strange and glorious — the NYC punk aesthetic collides with free jazz and a healthy slab of funk to create Mr James White/Chance's musical vision. The Contortions were a solid band, with the freedom to get real crazy, while James barked out R&B styled vocals and scorching sax solos. It sounds a little sloppy at times, all these years on, but there's definitely great moments, like a live and very aggro version of 'Jailhouse Rock'. Great liner notes courtesy of Robert Palmer, one of the few rock writers who deserves any respect.

Last up is *Dreamtime*, by Tom Verlaine. Although his post-Television work is patchy, this album is worth a little attention. There's definite moments where Verlaine gets the trancy rock vibe in full flight, without sacrificing the simple rock drive that keeps us chowderheads happy. It's dense sounding stuff, largely due to guitars that are double tracked and played off against each other. Although *Dreamtime* never quite soars like Television could, there are

some moments elevation here and, as with all these releases, if every weak link from STP to Oasis can have their albums available, then these people sure deserve something. All are worth checking out and apparently there's some really fine stuff like Alan Vega and a Def Jam singles compilation coming up. Now aren't you glad you didn't shell out on that live Eagles set?

KIRK GEE

**DANIEL JOHNSTON** *Fun*  
(Atlantic)

With major labels frantically trying to cover their sorry asses on the 'alternative is cool' front, some downright strange things will happen, and this is certainly one of them. For those not aware of Mr Johnstons history, he's Texas based and happens to be certifiably insane. This hasn't stopped him from writing some beautifully surreal songs, and putting out a string of cassette releases that veer from affecting to downright bizarre. Now he's turned up on Atlantic with erstwhile Butthole Surfer and fan of great music Paul Leary producing this puppy. It's decidedly more hi-fi than all previous releases, with Leary and fellow Surfer

King Coffey laying down a very kicking, full band sound on a few tracks, a string selection appearing on others and plenty of Daniel's plain psycho-folk. Johnston is in great voice, part fragile warble in a Tiny Tim style, part confident and ironic rocker. *Fun* may not be as endearingly lo-fi and quirky as Johnston's earlier work, but it's nice to see him given a chance to be something more than a novelty.

KIRK GEE

**PAINKILLER** *Execution Ground*  
(Subharmonic)

Can't really go wrong with Zorn, Laswell and ex-Napalm Death/current Scorn guy Mick Harris — and, sure enough, you don't. 'Execution Ground' is slightly different territory for Painkiller, veering, as it does, toward a more spaced out feel. It's a two disc set. Disc one is more familiar stuff — Harris and Laswell setting up a bottom end that can break bones, while Mr Zorn does the Ornette thing in usual powerful fashion. It's music that eschews hooks and pop confections to snare the listener. Painkiller just flat out grab you and make you come along for the ride.

The best part of this ride is the second disc,

which is the 'ambient' version, but comes off more as jazz/dub that's ready to slap you upside the head. It's On-U turned vicious and real heavy, and if your hi-fi can handle some serious low tones, you'll understand where the label name comes from. I'll go a stretch and say it's up there as some of the best work from these people, and they have some pretty high standards.

KIRK GEE

**THESE ANIMAL MEN**  
*Come On (Join) The High Society*  
(Virgin)

These Animal Men's *Too Sussed* EP of last year was disappointingly tame. *Come On* is way better, with their obvious debts to the Buzzcocks and Sham 69 giving their pop a dynamism and energy that kicks over the traces in the mock youth anthem 'This Is the Sound Of Youth', and in the my-generation statements of 'We Are Living' and 'Sharp Kid'. Cheeky, irreverent and perceptive, but hardly Animal Men — more Pet Shop Boys.

GEORGE KAY



I got a haircut,  
**SO** where's  
the job?