



Grace

#### GRACE Black Sand Shore

Phew, what an album! Hot hot hot. Grace are actually three New Zealand Samoan brothers, who combine to produce beautiful modern soul. Clearly of an international standard, the boys recently toured with Ruby Turner, and have already had two Top 10 hits. The production is lush, with the guys sounding very slick indeed. Already receiving lots of radio play, the title track offers a good indication of what can be expected from the album. The loasa brothers weave their way beautifully through a variety of soft soul, funk and ballads. The end result is wonderful.

#### APACHE INDIAN Make Way For The Indian

A new four-track EP from the oddly named Apache Indian (he's whanau is from India not North America), who helped establish the ragga style in the UK in the early 90s. Joined by Tim Dog and backed by Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, this is stirring stuff, and could give him the cross-over success he deserves. Not that he's sold-out — the beats are hard and the vocals true — it's just that timing is on his side.

#### CHANNEL LIVE Station Identification

Fighting the commercial tide of gangsta rap and nursery rap come Channel Live, two dreadlocked rappers from the KRS-One school of righteousness. The album is a mix of fluid jazzy grooves and hardcore kick-ass bass, courtesy of producers KRS-One and Salaam Remi, and the lyrics aren't bad either. 'Cause and Effect' focuses on the current trend of rappers who use the words 'bitch' and 'nigger' to sound hardcore. Delivered on a boom bap groove, if that's too PC for you then

check out 'Sex For The Sport of It'. A humorous look at sex (and the chase), it's done in the style of a sports commentary. Trivia note: these guys were once dancers for Naughty By Nature.

#### JAKI GRAHAM You Can Count On Me

This gal has been trying a long time for success, and it's good to see her back after some small-scale dancefloor hits in the late 80s. This song is all over the radio, and while it's nice pop, the best track is the 'hip-hop' version of her previous single 'Ain't Nobody' (a cover of the Chaka Khan song). For those who prefer the stuff they hear in hip hairdresser's check Dancin' Danny D's remix of 'You Can Count On Me'.

#### RAINBOW NATION I've Never Been To Me

Although just hitting our cinema screens now, Muriel's Wedding played the UK last year. One of the first songs in that (great!) film is this, although it's the original version by Charlene. These guys obviously picked up quick on it's potential, and have churned out this 90s dancefloor version for the pop audience. The single mix left me bored real quick, but that's obviously the radio version. For the extended 'Mighty Mix', lead vocalist Dione makes it crystal clear what camp she pitches her tent in.

#### M-PEOPLE Open Your Heart

Can this band do no wrong? Well, looking at the smash success of both albums, their previous singles, and their recent sell-out New Zealand tour, I guess the answer is: No! Listening to this, however, I'm inclined to wonder if they haven't perhaps gone to the well once to often. Certainly

not their best single to date, although being 'more of the same', the masses should love it.

#### SCATMAN JOHN Scatman

Hmmm, two Italians and an American GI, produced in Germany... strange indeed. This is jazz-rap which goes right back to the roots, to resurrect the scat style of vocals so prominent in old school jazz. Scatman John raps in a ragga vocal style before breaking out into scat ('ski ba bop ba dop bop ska didly be bop') and the result is quite pleasing, if not a little quaint.

#### 4PM SukiYaki

Back in the 70s, a Japanese duo called Taste of Honey had a massive radio and chart hit with this. Two decades later, 4PM do it all over again — capella doo-wop style. I guess I'm showing my age when I say I remember both the original and think this years model aint a patch on the original version.

#### MC SAR and THE REAL McCOY Run Away

This one really cracks me up. The lyrics are sooo meaningless. Sure, most pop is drivel, but this one realllly scrapes the bottom of the barrel. Tortured teens everywhere will no doubt treat it as gospel spake from Jesus himself: if life is getting you down, and things are too tough, then *run away*. Just promise me one thing (you pathetic, snivelling, no-life losers who go for this techno-pop dross) when you run away (only to be dragged back home by the cops), tell them it was this song that made you do it. And then ring *New Idea* with your story — John Banks could use the headline.

#### DREAM WARRIORS California Dreamin'

If Canadian rappers Dream Warriors can crack the minor leagues internationally, then our own Urban Disturbance can't be too far behind. Very similar styles inasmuch that DW go for ambient jazzy beat with a loose lyrical rhyme flow laid out over the top. From their new album *Subliminal Stimulation*, this has absolutely nothing to do with a song by the Mamas and the Papas. It's an ode to being away from your girlfriend and not cheating on her (amongst other things).

#### LISA MOORISH Just The Way It Is

This is an ode to being a 90s gal who doesn't like being disrespected by male dogs trying to sniff out a bitch to play with. While I'm down with the sentiment, unfortunately this slice of pap doesn't really have the credibility of style to make it a serious statement.

#### WHITE MEN CAN'T REGGAE Montego Bay

Yet another shameless cover of a Number 1 hit of decades past. While this new version is destined to be played at every party from Henderson to Hornby, it's purely a novelty record done with tongue firmly in cheek. I'm reliably informed this Aussie trio are packing them in by the thousand across the Tassie with their unique brand of reggaeified classics, so no doubt we'll see them here too. Four mixes here, all by Nu-Q and all featuring a solid reggae dance beat.

#### DRIZABONE Conspiracy

Described by one critic as a cross between The Brand New Heavies and Sade, this London two piece (three if you include lead vocalist Kimberly Peer) are very slick indeed. If you've been left a little tired by M People and want to slow the groove down a bit, then give this a whirl. Intelligent, sophisticated, and yet still hip, Drizabone deftly try their hand at soul, pop, ballads and jazz. Some of the guest rappers aren't great, but the overall effect is sublime, and this album is guaranteed to have your next dinner party pumping.

#### PORTRAIT All That Matters

Whoa Jimmy, this is pretty slick stuff. Portrait are four guys who sing very well and specialise in the lovey dovey slow jams that seem so popular these days. I found their material a little too syrupy however, especially when compared with the adult sophistication of Grace. Still, Portrait do what they do very well and the production is superb. Unlike many similar bands, they are in control of their own sound so I guess this is what they want you to hear (there is some uptempo stuff). Seventies fans will love the note perfect remake of The Bee Gees 'How Deep Is Your Love'.

#### SIR MIXALOT Chief Boot Knocka


His last album spawned a US Number 1 hit (and a lot of controversy) with 'Baby Got Back'. This album sees him back in the hot seat with 'Put 'Em On The Glass', another tale about women (this one shifting attention from their butts to their breasts). This is not a PC record at all, and you should know that before you listen to it. Fans of Mixalot already do, and they won't be disappointed with Chief Boot Knocka. Phat beats, naughty lyrics, and an attitude that won't quit have made the man very popular. I'm no fan of sexist rap, but this stuff has a cheekiness to it I can't help but like. Blame it on my testosterone.

NICK D'ANGELO

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