



Elastica

section is up with the best anywhere. Many a great guitarist has withered due to a lame rhythm section, and many a lame front line has been carried by a sharp back line, but this four-some are almost other worldly in their compatibility. This is most evident on *Killjoy's* finest moment, 'Gimme Gimme', a five-minute, earth shattering blow to the head, that wraps a shouted vocal over what must be one of the most powerful and infectious basslines ever recorded.

While *Killjoy* won't crush you into submission the way *Chum* played at 11 could, its mixture of melodic dynamics and periods of intense noise still make it an album full of scary good times.

JOHN RUSSELL

**ELASTICA** *Elastica*  
(Geffen)

This eponymously titled debut album lives up to the British press raves that have been showered on this nearly all female (drummer Justin Welch is the odd man out) four-piece from London.

Near flawless influences like Wire, Buzzcocks, the Clash and Blondie ricochet around most of the tracks, with even kinetic memories of the Revillos being resurrected on the likes of 'Annie'. The killer track has to be 'Waking Up', with its aching pure pop melody,

driven by the dual guitars of Justine Frischmann and Donna Matthews. The jabbing, prodding, ultimately infectious single 'Connection' is just one of sixteen reasons why *Elastica* have managed to live up to the advanced hype.

GEORGE KAY

**FUGAZI** *Red Medicine*  
(Dischord)

Yeah, this is a long review, but that's because I truly believe this to be a great record by one of the few creative, musically relevant and genuinely brilliant rock bands around. Forget the (suddenly fashionable again) DIY independent punk ethos stuff that surrounds Fugazi, just listen to the damn record. It's four guys taking what they have to the very limit, and sometimes a little further.

The heart of it all is one of the finest rhythm sections ever. Canty and Lally lay down and maintain the most sinewy, popping, sinking lines ever, and its over this that Messrs MacKaye and Picciotto have the room to get wild, which they most certainly do. *Red Medicine* still has the three minute energy burst songs, with Ian taking the outright angry moments and Guy handling the more melodic excursions (of which 'Target' is near perfect and features some very righteous lyrics). Around these some strange patterns are

woven. Songs are dragged out and rebuilt in some twisted variant of dub. The rhythms flow while the guitars sputter and spit, even descending into solid walls of feedback. It's punk rock being deconstructed before your very ears, although it's nowhere near as pretentious sounding as I've just made it seem. Quite simply, you get a great little ditty, then moments later it gets gutted, turned inside out, or broken down.

Fugazi can do 'Long Distance Runner' (which is the bare bones of a song, with vocals doing the melodic work while guitars snap in and out like some strange effect) and 'Combination Lock' (which is a most grooving and sweet instrumental) without either seeming forced. *Red Medicine* may well seem like Fugazi's most disparate and challenging album, but it's also probably their best for those very reasons. No matter where they go with the music, it always maintains the simple power to really move the listener. The further they push the limits of a rock song, the further we are taken with them.

KIRK GEE

**MATTHEW SWEET** *100% Fun*  
(BMG)

After having a large bout of heaviness and/or depression (musically), little Matthew (30) is just what you need to um, 'let the sunshine in, and face it with a grin' and all that. Matthew has called his album *100% Fun* — which is apparently pulled from one of the lines in Kurt's suicide note (he was not having 100% fun). Yes, yes — anyway, this is a lovely, lovely album. I was enticed by the first single 'Sick Of Myself' — which is a simple song, yet charmingly catchy — and had to see what else there was.

The record has a very warm, fuzzy feeling (because of the way it has been recorded — it's low-fi without being wacky lo-fi), reminiscent of listening to Beatles records when you were a kiddy (if you are over 20), or Lenny Kravitz records (if you are under 15). *100% Fun* isn't totally (naturally — this is a record), but it's very settling and pretty, kind of like sticking your head in a pillow and hitting it hard — totally enjoyable, without any consequences.

SHIRLEY CHARLES

**VARIOUS** *Dope On Plastic*  
(Flying In)

**VARIOUS** *110 Below: A Trip to the cHip sHop*  
(Flying In)

**VARIOUS** *Ninja Cuts*  
(Flying In)

Wow. Woah. Wahey. I know everyone's rebelling against the trip-hop pigeon hole, but this UK revolution, these ambi funkateers, these spliffed up sultans of smooove are gonna alter your mind. Like all your harvests at once, here are three of the best compilations around, thanks to those importing bewdies Flying In.

To start, there's *Dope on Plastic*, a cartoon trying to smoke a CD on the cover, and babies with goatee beards inside. Hmm, yes, and apparently trip hoppers smoke the occasional joint. Apparently. Anyway, jazzy influences, slowed horn sections that sound like they've been in on the session (especially Woodshed's 'Reefman Cometh'). Men With Sticks open impressively with the hazy 'Ode To A Blunt', APE's 'Cities' has stingrays battling with Mexican acoustic guitar amongst giant sea anenomes. We close with some of Skylab's aquatic ambi, 'Seashell', with the sample: 'I put a seashell to my ear and it all comes back.'

*Dope On Plastic* is a sound piece of scene.

A *Trip to the cHip sHop* is a more varied look at hip-hop's experimental mergers. Again, it's mostly instrumental, apart from the folk-hop of Beck ('In a Cold Ass Fashion') and the Ultramagnetic MCs. More patchy compared to *Ninja* and *Dope*, because as it tries to cover so many styles, it loses its own identity as a compilation. But the highs are very high, DJ Crush and UNKLE from Mo Wax are both ear openers. And 'Motherfucken Ghost' by the Euro contingent The Mighty Bop is so late night that even the 24 hour clubs are asleep.

But then, next to the dark taste of *Ninja Cuts* from Coldcut's Ninja Tune label, everything shrivels by comparison. This compilation, (subtitled *FunkJazztical Tricknology*) lives beyond its boast to provide sounds with superior beat, style and composition. One load of Kruder and Dorfmeister's 'Deep Shit' and there's no kicking the addiction. Beats that twist and crust and clarify and muddy. Vibes, ghostly clicks, a grand piano with a flat battery, it's like black water rafting with enough THC to stun an elephant. And that's just track two! There are plenty of sounds that'll surprise you, like the amazing sample from Up, Bustle and Out's 'Y Ahora Tu', of Baka Forrest tribesmen making beats with their cupped hands in a river. There's plenty of DJ Food ('Dark Lady' bombs some serious bass). 9Plan9's funky drum beats glide that shit along, and even Coldcut themselves provide some curvy mutant masterpieces.

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Matthew Sweet

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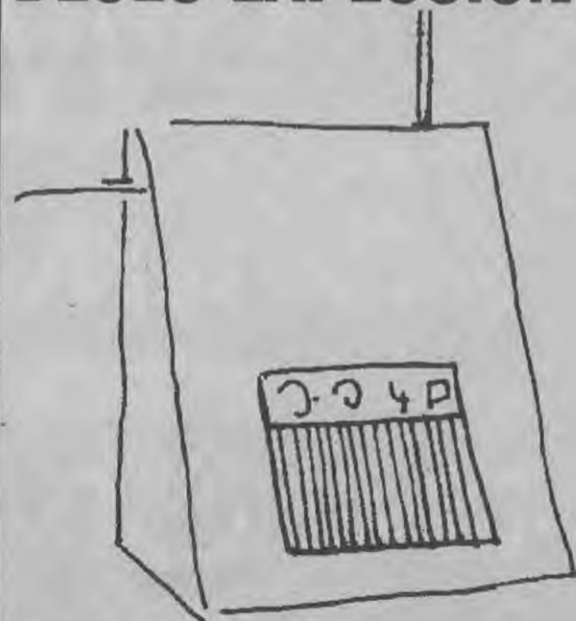
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