

albums

Morphine



In your face. Take notice and be consumed.
JOHN TAITE

TINDERSTICKS *Tindersticks* (This Way Up)

Tindersticks second album, perversely titled the same as their first, presents a languid facade smacking of cognac and smoking jackets in a low-lit room. Look closer, though, and you realise that all is not quite as it should be. There's a disturbing decadence moving gently below *Tindersticks* mannered surface — a decadence inexorably drawn up like a sheet of blotter paper soaking up red wine... or blood. The effect is captivating and utterly unnerving — like being force fed Peter Greenaway movies after ingesting huge amounts of Valium. The vibrancy of the hues and the vividness of the images are almost unbearably intense in their melancholy, conjuring up much more than a mere listening experience has the right to conjure up. But then, *Tindersticks* are much more than your average band, operating in spheres far removed from the notion of any so-called scene.

Put simply, *Tindersticks* sounds like no other album you'll hear this year. It's impossible to ignore if for nothing other than the experience of listening to a band delicately treading the line between unbearable and unbelievable. The question is, which side of the coin faces up for you?

MARTIN BELL

MOTORHEAD *Bastards* (XYZ)

The motto here would be: 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.' The mighty Lemmy Kilminster has been producing the finest greaser rock imaginable from the Rockin' Vicars through Hawkwind, and on into the reign of Motorhead. *Bastards* is proof that, if he tries, he can still cut it. With a newly beefed up Wurzel and a couple of new boys, when Lemmy busts right out with that classic solid raunch — 'Burner' or 'Death or Glory' — it's just plain power. The trouble is, sometimes things get derailed. A ballad about child molestation that's as ham fisted as you'd imagine, or 'Born to Raise Hell', which sounds like it was written in the studio. I guess Lemmy's psychic radar kicked in and he realised the film this was intended for would suck and he'd wind up playing with lumpen opportunists like Ugly Kid Joe. Certainly not a perfect album, but enough that I can happily say, I still believe in Motorhead.

KIRK GEE

VARIOUS *Alternative Nation 95* (Mushroom)

VARIOUS *Higher Learning* (Sony)

Alternative Nation is some new concert weekend in Australia. It happened over Easter, apparently. This is a cash in compilation of some of the bands that played — as blatantly

money spinning as the *Voodoo Lounge* live video. And who cares about an Australian concert?

But hang on — put that hatchet away. As a stand-alone compilation, it's all alternative guitar-obics (well, apart from the dismal Das FX, but you'd be advised to skip that track). Faith No More, Bodycount and Primus have all provided some good tracks from their latest albums. There's Ween's 'Can't Put My Finger On It' and Supergroove's 'You Freak Me' (with the vocal mix so low you'd think it was an instrumental), and some metal bizzo from unknowns (well, I'd never heard of them) Peyote and Nitocris. It's all pretty average fare, that at least leaves you feeling like you didn't miss much at the gig.

Hopefully John Singleton's movie *Higher Learning* will be as back on track as this soundtrack. Forget Janet and her *Poetic Jaundice*. *Higher Learning* opens with this film's star, Ice Cube, with the spesh, smovie title track. It's weird hearing him rap about varsity though.

There's more rap gymnastics from Outcast's 'Phobia', but there are broad musical flavourings going on here (compared to say, the *Boys in the Hood* soundtrack). The Brand New Heavies get some acid jazz going on, Me Shelle's sultry soul is as sexy as licking chocolate sauce off a perfect body. And then there's Rage Against the Machine and Liz Phair! But the spotlight is stolen and smuggled all over the world by Tori Amos. Her bare, piano accompanied version of REM's 'Losing My Religion' is what a cover version should be — completely different, with hidden strengths rising to the surface to inject a new life into the original idea.

Higher Learning is a strong new music soundtrack that might even get you liking some sounds outside your usual preference.

JOHN TAITE

SUPERGRASS *I Should Coco* (EMI)

Supergrass make me smile. Beyond the stats like they're an Oxford three-piece, and lead singer Gaz is only 18, and boring trivia like that, there's magic going on here. Magic, life, fun, youth. Right from the start, 'I'd Like to Know' pulls you into the hyped up party buzz they live in. Mad organ, rocked up guitars, muppet-like 'la la la' chorus, and Gaz singing about wanting 'to go where all the strange ones go'.

When they do punk, you can forget the bloody New Wave Of New Wavers, or the bland, processed yank bollocks. 'Caught By The Fuzz'

is being busted with a joint by the baby bugging, brainless cop scum: 'In the back of the van, with my head in my hands / I wish I could've stayed at home tonight...' guitars racing like a pulse, and pop that will hum around in your mind for weeks.

They're not a punk band. That's just a segment of their sound. There's the helium vocals of 'We're Not Supposed To', that hints at Ween as much as Syd Barrett. The gleeful 'Alright' sets it straight that the kids in the so called 'Safe 90s' are still fucking around, getting fucked up and rolling cars in fields. There's rock 'n' roll, with 'Lose It' (being released in the states on Sub Pop) and 'Lenny', there's glam metal meets Madness, on 'Mansized Rooster' and 10 zillion tonnes of fun on the rest of the album.

I Should Coco is one of 95s greats, from a band that make everyone else sound like a boring, restrained bunch of plodders. It's youth. It's what keeps you from the suits and the mortgages. If you need a boost of that, you need some Supergrass.

JOHN TAITE

MORPHINE *Yes* (Rykko)

A couple of years ago this Boston trio was the hip name to drop around cafes and wine bars. Here was a novel guitarless saxophone band, that didn't threaten or challenge the senses. In Mark Sandman's Muddy Waters-ish vocals and swinging R&B songs, they had a rootsiness that gave their second album, *Cure For Pain*, a durable context.

Yes isn't so convincing, and it's going to disappoint Morphine addicts. The first side (or first half dozen songs in CD-speak) has their customary catchy sax riffs, with 'Radar' taking the prizes. The band then try to up the temperature with the off-the-wall craziness of 'Super Sex', and extend their boundaries with the film noir atmospherics of 'The Jury'. Both fail. And although 'Free Love' is a heavy, hypnotic slice of sax drama, it can't save an album that makes too many wrong moves.

GEORGE KAY

SCOTT WALKER *Tilt* (Fontana)

Like most cult figures, Scott Walker has a small but fanatical following — devotees who've kept his name alive through the largely barren periods of his career in the 70s and 80s. From the sublime and resonant pop dra-

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