



den of his self conscious need for melodrama. Passable.

The Cruel Sea are much more modest in their recycled blues ambitions. Their hang-dog, bayou rootsiness is like dragging your head through a swamp of sludgy grooves, dirty vocals, booming basslines and down home slide geetars. Hardly indigenously Australian, but they're onto a winning formula that they refine/define even more closely on *Three Legged Dog* than on the previous *The Honeymoon is Over*.

Wading into the everglades, and the best on offer has to be the singles 'Anybody But You' and the huge, grumbling 'Better Get a Lawyer', and the shimmering 'Too Late to Turn Back' — high points from an album that's a seamless unity of 15 shots of New Orleans R&B. It's hard to believe the'll improve on this formula — time for a change from catfish pie?

GEORGE KAY

**CROWBAR** Time Heals Nothing (Pavement)

Fatty alert: the heaviest boys of heavy rock return after too short an absence with another heavy album. *Time Heals Nothing* is not like the last heavy album because this time the Crowbarites wanna make loadsa dosh. Last time Crowbar gave you dull, mind numbingly heavy and plodding tunes. This time the formula is repeated, but with a ballad and more singing.

For all those fans of incomprehensible, grunted lyrics: prepare to feel cheated, 'cause this time you get to hear almost all the words, and that's not a smart move. Throughout *Time Heals Nothing*, tears are wiped away, minds

are enslaved and bodies perpetually suffer. Where do these behemoths of boredom get their nutty ideas from? Could they have been borrowed from their fellow gloomy tour buddies, Paradise Lost, inspired by the look of the fans in the mosh pit, or is it all just bad memories from kindly regurgitated? Only the aching millenniums of *Time*'s twisted pain can answer this question. Until then, my lips are sealed.

KEVIN LIST

**MONSTER MAGNET** Dopes to Infinity (A&M)

Although there's nothing better than rock music that's familiar with the recreational use of prescription medicines, I never quite clicked with Monster Magnet until this very fine album. Best I can tell, that's because they've lost the overly dense, hard-and-fucked up thing, and stuck with their simple greaser ambitions. The result is a big warm sound (love that AAD recording) on big, bad songs.

The guitars are huge, with all manner of effects and strangeness, and the songs are just plain good. Some, like 'Ego, the Living Planet' or 'Third Alternative', are deranged and druggy, while a few, like the title track and, most obviously, 'Negasonic Teenage Warhead', are outright hard rock hit songs. All of them have a good balance of hook and hard, and Monster Magnet don't resort to alternative posturing or cheap theatrics, like 99 percent of today's 'heavy metal' bands. They do, however, write couplets like: 'The mountain screamed three times today / I guess it thought I'd like to play,' but I think that just suggests they have access to some strong Vicodin. It's good to see such resolutely bad-ass rock rearing it's

head again, and until I see the new stuff from Kyuss and AC/DC, *Dopes to Infinity* is going to be heard often.

KIRK GEE

**BLACK SABBATH** Forbidden (IRS)

If anything should be forbidden it is Tony Iommi from making more Black Sabbath albums. However, it seems he will never say die, so it's best to remember Sabbath by those original heavy master (of reality) pieces of yesterday.

Iommi still has that natural penchant for mean guitar riffery, but mostly it's just retreads of old tunes with the occasional good lead break. Current bandmates Powell, Murray and Martin offer little in the creative way, and the end result has enough clichés to fill a crypt for a Spinal Tap mini series.

'Illusion of Power' has guest vocals from Ice T. His fellow Bodycounter guitarist Ernie C is responsible for the basic production, but the intended raw 90s sound merely emphasises the slap-dash feel of the songs. The band can probably cut it pretty well live, but it's more fun to look at the detailed cartoon cover of *Forbidden* than it is to listen to it.

GEOFF DUNN

**CLOUDBOY** Cloudboy (Infinite Regress)

Demarnia Lloyd from Dunedin band Mink is the singer/songwriter for Cloudboy. Most of Cloudboy also performed on Mink's debut album. Mink's strength lay in the number of styles they covered, with various people taking lead on vocals. With this album, it's like a longer, deeper look at the type of Mink songs Lloyd sang. They tend to be string intensive, with the rhythm section keeping a basic beat and Demarnia melancholically whispering her words with a very sweet, clean melody. This lack of variety is the album's downfall. Lloyd's voice becomes cloying and, at times, too cutesy. The small breadth of the album would have been more suited to an EP, rather than being stretched to eight tracks that total just over 30 minutes.

The best tracks are the eerie, sparse 'Pine', sounding musically like Björk, and 'Nicknames of Devils (Rose 3)', which is the older, more sophisticated sibling of Mink's 'Rubber Saxophone', with it's weird instrumentation and Lloyd singing a list of things that 'Nobody

knows...'

The Infinite Regress collective seem to be doing something that nobody else is doing — specialists in super clean production, with lush orchestration and a twisted take on grandiose pop. It's just in this case time Cloudboy should have extended themselves further.

DARREN HAWKES

**STEVE VAI** Alien Love Secrets (Relativity)

The fourth solo release by this extraordinary guitarist is a mini album that returns to the instrumental style which he peaked with on *Passion and Warfare*. These seven new tracks are composed, produced and performed solely by Vai (except for drums in a couple of places) and, naturally enough, there is extreme emphasis on guitar.

'Bad Horsie' kicks things off, with a wicked riff interspersed with Steve creating horse whinies on his custom Ibanez Jem, to great effect. The most outstanding piece, 'Die to Live', shows Steve has reached an even higher level of musicianship, while 'Juice' is a more straight ahead, rockin' boogie. Respects are paid to the lord of the strings, Jimi Hendrix, on 'The Boy From Seattle', as it's played with the gentle feel of something like 'Castles Made of Sand'. Steve's son (aged five) improvised the lyrics for 'Ya-Yo Gakk', though it's obviously only included as a bit of novelty recording fun. Following that, the frantic 'Kill the Guy With the Ball' segues into the weird 'God Eaters', and the album finishes beautifully with the aptly titled 'Tender Surrender'.

*Alien Love Secrets* has a running time of 34 minutes, which is about the same as LPs used to be, so it's good value at around \$20. Recommended for anyone with an interest in Vai, virtuosity, vibrato and Venusians.

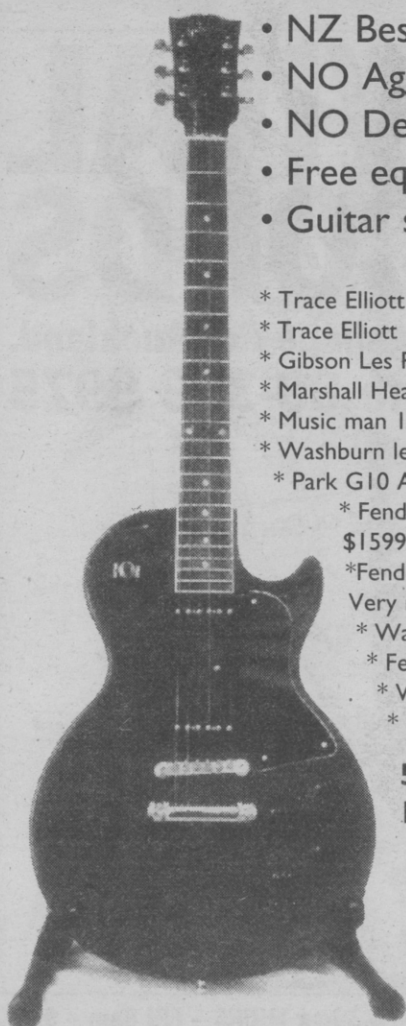
GEOFF DUNN

**DUB WAR** Pain (Flying In)

**CHAVEZ** Gone Glimmering (Matador)

I hate comparing bands to other bands, but how are you going to envisage Dub War, a very metal, ragga rap beast, without mentioning Ministry, Fishbone and PWEI? Then maybe Ruthless Rap Assassins (RIP) and Rage Against The Machine? They don't sound like any of these bands, of course, there are just familiar elements: the raging guitars, the furious toast-

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