

albums

ing, the crusty dance beats and electronic enhancements, that Jourgensen-like sense of terror.

Dub War are mosh pit maestros. The beats bounce you, the riffs make your teeth clench, and the vocals growl and sneer enough for your angriest moments. Ignore the fact they come from Wales.

Chavez are an unknown New York band that few people know anything about. Even their light record company biography could only muster some trivia about how they used to be in some other equally unknown bands.

Their sound is guitar noir from Gotham. The opening track, 'Nailed to the Blank Spot', sets that up pretty damn quick — innocent vocal melodies, smothered by guitar screams and bash-them-to-bits drumming. A couple of songs suggest they've been to more than a few Bailter Space gigs in their home town (listen to 'The Ghost By The Sea'). Then songs like 'Flaming Gong' sound like they're an evil Smashing Pumpkins twin — a darker, nastier version that won't sell as many records. Sonic spawn from Kim and Thurston. Very New York. Clumsily elegant.

JOHN TAITE

PETER DROGE Necktie Second
(American)

Droge is no slouch. Right from his blonde haircut, slightly nasal drawl, and easy rockin' style on six and 12 string, he's a dead ringer for Tom Petty. *Necktie Second* is the ideal title for Droge's laid back, ambling ballads. They're all fleshed out by fine tones, with traditional titles like 'Northern Bound Train' and 'Fourth of July', and even more traditional sentiments like 'Faith In You'. Originality sure don't figure, but Droge is on the right train.

GEORGE KAY

EARTHLING Radar
(Cooltempo)

There I was, harshing it out in front of the TV, on a Sunday as regular as they get around these parts. Out of the blue, a smooth rap filled my ears: 'I know who I am / I'm not who you think I am...' I turned on my visuals — name: Earthling; title: 'First Transmission'; picture: a lazy-eyed rapper making his case to a ring of homo sapiens. I pinched myself and made a quick check for tracking devices. Everything seemed to be in order, except for the TV, which was spiling the debut single equivalent of Robert Altman's *The Player* (due to the spectacular cast the lyrics have drawn together). I had to find the transmitter.

Logically enough, a *Radar* was the cause. There were plenty more cast lists to be found: everyone from Joan of Arc to Harvey Keitel

turns up here. The aforementioned rapper is Mau, and his musical partner is T Saul. Additional vocalists are the velvet voiced Moni, and the truly shimmering Segun. Together they've created an album sure to get Bristol heads hopping. Although *Radar* draws definite parallels with the Holy Trinity (and Portishead's Geoff Barrow lends a hand here), the songs tend to pivot more centrally on their lyrical content and drawn out musical quirks (you know, for fun).

I don't mind telling you how relieved I was to be actually holding this groovy debut in my hands, if only to prove my strange experience had not been a figment of my imagination. There are enough weird things happening in this bad old world, without my mind heading for the Euphoric Zone without me.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

HORACE ANDY Life is for Living
(Ariwa)

HORACE ANDY In The Light
(Blood and Fire/Chant)

Horace Andy is one of reggae's greatest voices — no contest. Like the deeper tones of Burning Spear or the memorable Bob Marley, Horace Andy's voice is unforgettable. His amazing tenor can carry emotion in a whisper or spit out conscious lyrics with a passionate edge.

Produced by the Mad Professor and released this year, *Life is for Living* proves Horace Andy hasn't lost any creativity. *Life is for Living* borrows a little from dancehall, a little from lovers' rock, and again covers a large chunk of Rastafarian consciousness.

A flute swirls around the rhythm as the Professor dubs in a little space on the title track and 'What a Day' — 'What a victory it will be / When all Africans are free' — as soft horns echo the vocals. Stand out tracks are 'Nah Dis You', 'Rebel' and 'Armageddon'. On 'Nah Dis You', a drawn out chorus and two-tone horn phrasing help Horace weave a magic spell. Straight into 'Never Deceive You', and he's still on the same subject — undying love — but it's a little more up beat and lacks a memorable hook.

'Rebel' is a call for people's rights and a warning to beware the suits. 'Jacket and tie always come round / With a smiling face and a lying tongue / Promise to turn your life around.' Sounds like Horace has been watching kiwi politics; this is a modern version of the Gladiators' militant trip. 'Armageddon' has a wicked bassline that pulls you into a whirlpool of righteousness — Rasta believers marching on Babylon.

Recorded in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1977, *In the Light* and its companion dub set, mixed by Prince Jammy, are propelled by rock steady rhythms and tasty accompaniment from the all star cast of backing musicians, including Augustus Pablo, Leroy Sibbles and Horsemouth Wallace, and a filthy horn section with names like Tommy McCook and Don D Junior.

'Government Land' would make a perfect anthem for the Maori sovereignty movement, with its call to 'give up Jah land, government man'. 'Do You Love My Music' and 'Hey There Woman' are catch cries for reggae, while 'If I' is simply brilliant. Horace Andy's songs are simple — it's the voice, delivery, and sharp backing that lift them into another league. Wicked stuff.

Those who saw Horace Andy with Massive Attack will have seen one of the best reggae vocalists around, unfortunately in an all too brief appearance. The rest of you poor sods will have to buy these two albums. Once on the CD platter, it's hard to take them off again.

MARK REVINGTON

KINGMAKER In the Best Possible Taste
(Chrysalis)

Kingmaker were originally one of those bands that in the early 90s continuously toured the UK in a van, while making their money from a cute line in T-Shirts. Just before the release of their previous album, they transformed themselves into smartly dressed men with nice quiffs.

The cover of *Best Possible Taste* features main man Loz Hardy with a quiff and a gold lamé top. Still, the music has never really developed beyond it's influences. In and out slip The The, the Wonderstuff, Suede and even Metallica. You can hear the band straining for greatness — the attempt at anthemic songs, the clever lyrics and Loz singing (for) his life — but, like Jesus Jones, Kingmaker's weakness is in fact Loz's very singing, his nasal intonation with the high notes just round the bend. While genius may steal, Loz's style is a second-rate version of those he has ripped off.

Loz's words are where he catches up on his mentors. While sometimes he overworks a pun (something Suede, The The and Morrissey have all been guilty of), there are some real *bon mots*, like: 'Work, work, work / It's no way to make a living.'

Kingmaker try so hard to catch our attention with their 'hey, look at me' attitude, but nobody's interested. Nothing will stop them trying, but if they want to be famous, and they obviously do, they're going to have to reinvent themselves once more.

DARREN HAWKES

THE CAULFIELDS Whirligig
(A&M)

DISHWALLA Pet Your Friends
(A&M)

'I'm stage-diving off the church of the holier than thou, and I'm bigger than Jesus now.'

Taking their name from the main character in JD Salinger's 'The Catcher in the Rye', the Caulfields' debut is the platform singer/guitarist John Faye has chosen to get a few things off his chest. The above lyric is from the opening 'Devil's Diary', and the mental picture is of

Joe Jackson fronting the Attractions to a 1:3 beat. Relating the story of a young man's struggle for self respect and his disillusionment with organised religion, it is typical of the album.

Using their hometown of Newark for inspiration, they have fashioned a series of hard hitting pop vignettes which chronicle subjects as diverse as racial intolerance ('Disease') and the loss of a parent ('The Day That Came and Went'). *Growing Up in Small Town America* could have been *Whirligig's* working title, and it impresses for many of the same reasons Randy Newman's *Land of Dreams* did back in 1988. Recommended.

Also on A&M, Dishwalla's references are equally broad, and the scope of their lyrics just as ambitious. Sometimes, however, as on the opening 'Pretty Babies' and 'Miss Emma Peel', the songs drift toward AOR banality, carrying a balladic, bromidic burden. Dishwalla throw fewer curves than the Caulfields, often 'resorting' to guitar-fests rather than selecting them.

Highlights are 'Haze', which meshes Isaac Hayes and Led Zeppelin, intelligently tackling the subect of alcoholism within a family. 'Charlie Brown's Parents' discusses the difficulties of communicating, and 'Moisture' sees vocalist JR Richards aping Alice in Chains' Layne Staley. Best of all is 'Counting Blue Cars', which approaches religion from an alternate perspective and contains the line: 'Tell me all your thoughts on God... I'd really like to meet her.'

MARK DONOVAN

GUTTERBALL Weasel
(Festival)

Gutterball are sort of indie-rock supergroup: Steve Wynn, ex-Dream Syndicate, Bryan Harvey, Johnny Hott from House of Freaks, Stephen McCarthy ex-Long Ryders, and Armistead Wellford of Love Tractor. Their second album sees their distinctive guitar pop fuelling songs about older women, nightclubs that have closed down, sugar (a metaphor for something else, methinks), and that old standby, fancying your best friend's girlfriend.

Recorded in three days, *Weasel's* got a boozy, matey cheer about it, which at times makes one think it would've been more fun to be there than on this side of the speakers. That said, 'Transperancy' and 'Is There Something I Should Know?' are beguiling guitar pop — but then you realise it's the riff from 'Needles and Pins', and the other is Dylan's 'Absolutely Sweet Marie'. The best track here is 'California' (a slow brooding ballad), but the best lyric on the album has to go to these lines from 'One-Eyed Dog': 'I used to dry-wall / I used to paint houses / I used to catch roaches, termites and mice / Now everybody says that I'm useless and lazy / People are so kind man, they just amaze me...' Until local underdogs Shaft get their shit together and release that album, this'll do fine.

GREG FLEMING

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