



BJÖRK Post
(Mother Records)

Post is Björk's follow-up to the *Debut* that actually wasn't a debut, but proved to be a lot of other wonderful things for a lot of listeners. It sees her trip back into the spotlight, with her unusual phrasing, transcription defying accent and vocal acrobatics giddily in tow. Nellee Hooper has returned to her side, as one of the co-producers/co-writers on a super-charged call sheet.

From the big band reworking of 'It's Oh So Quiet' (the album's only cover, co-produced by 808 State's Graham Massey), the beseeching ambience of 'Possibly Maybe', and the soaring strings of 'Isobel', to the pumped-up trance of 'Hyperballad', Latin-like techno of 'I Miss You' (co-written and co-produced by Howie Bernstein), and the goading industrial sounds of 'Enjoy' (co-written and co-produced by Tricky), this is an intoxicating and highly addictive journey to the heart of its creator and the talents of her collaborators.

With no thought to thematic rhyme or reason, every song seems to be here simply because it feels like it. This makes *Post* an endearingly personal portrait. It doubles as an anytime salve for the senses, and the perfect wind up or down for a night under the lights.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

BAILTERSPLACE Wammo
(Flying Nun)

You know things are going to be different the moment you see the cover artwork. Gone are the blurred monochromatic images, with their rigid character fonts, to be replaced with the legs of a man about to putt a golf ball and lettering done with a twink pen.

It's simply a reaction to the cartoon version they became of themselves on their last album *Vortura*. From the album title to song titles like 'Galaxy', 'Reactor' and 'Shadow'. Cyber-what-ever. They'd played that field. Now they're 'Splat', 'Wammo' and 'Zapped', but it's really just a make-over, not actual cosmetic surgery.

They still sound the same, still the mix of pop songs right up against punky industrial songs. But this time Baiterspace are unplugged — not from their amps, but from their effects pedals. At first this seems to defeat the whole *raison d'être* of Baiterspace, but the more you listen the murkier things get. After endless listens, you're still no closer to understanding Baiterspace.

The album opens with the beautiful 'Untied', that could be straight off *Vortura*. The single 'Splat' follows, with its unoriginal video, but great refrain. 'At Five We Drive' is part of their noisier side, which stripped back sounds much more punkier than anything they've ever done before. 'Zapped' is a perfect example of the two styles of Baiterspace, starting with a lovely pop chorus and it's lack of bluriness bringing back memories of their Kilgour era, and then the song turns into a noisy chant of 'I don't wanna get zapped'. 'Voltage' is the only song that sounds out of place, recorded 'in context' (?), it sounds like a live jam, and while not a terrible song, should be tucked away as a B-side someplace else.

Baiterspace are New Zealand's only 'album-per-year' band and this year's *Wammo* punch will only enhance their reputation for gorgeous and barbed pop monuments.

DARREN HAWKES

JAN HELLRIEGEL Tremble
(Warner)

It's been three years since the release of Jan Hellriegel's debut album, *It's My Sin*. Since then, Jan has relocated waaay out West (Melbourne in fact), opting for a new career in a new town. *Tremble*, then, is something of a rebirth, as well as being a fresh start for an artist who has been out of the New Zealand

public eye for some time.

With the benefit of hindsight, only three songs linger on from Jan's debut effort: 'The Way I Feel', 'No Idea' and the title track itself. Too many of the rest were guilty of cluttered and fussy arrangements that robbed the songs of their tension and drama, ultimately diffusing the album's focus.

Tremble suffers no such problem. While the actual song writing marks no great leap forward, *Tremble* shows *It's My Sin* a clean pair of heels in other areas. Hellriegel has a dramatic, emotive voice, and this time round the songs serve to accentuate, rather than obscure this trait. Opening track 'Sneer' and single 'Manic (Is A State Of Mind)' are both charged with high drama and menace, while elsewhere Hellriegel shows the confidence to let the songs breathe and allow other qualities to shine through. The cinematic sweep of 'Touch Greenstone' and the gentler airs of 'Thinking' are equally convincing, as are a couple of killer pop songs in 'Pure Pleasure', which rocks out on the album's catchiest chorus, and the glorious closing track 'It's Not Me'.

In the past Jan Hellriegel has perhaps sounded like a woman bursting to get her muse out, without ever quite discovering how. *Tremble* is the sound of that discovery being made.

MARTIN BELL

MICHAEL JACKSON HlStory Book One
(Sony)

At age 11, pictures and posters of Michael Jackson were the wallpaper in my bedroom. Even the ceiling was plastered with the then 23

year old genius, who cast a captivating spell with his ability to move like both liquid and a machine. Never did I think this once fiercely self-styled individual would become nothing more than a 'product' of his own creation. Enter *HlStory Book One*.

HlStory is a two CD package — one disc holds 15 remastered number one singles, the second, 15 new Jackson tracks — and comes accompanied by a worldwide marketing campaign of outrageous proportions, designed to lift him to an almost frightening level of superstardom. The flaw in this plan is that Jackson continues his slide off the musical rails that began with 1993's *Dangerous* album.

On a lyrical level, much of *HlStory* deals with the molestation charges that dogged Jackson's personal life in recent years. While his words are undeniably heartfelt, any emotional investment doesn't extend to the accompanying music. Aside from the funky first single, 'Scream', studio wizardry has rendered the majority of songs — a uniform mixture of dance tracks and ballads — lifeless and lacking in warmth. With Jackson at the controls, or co-producing on all but two compositions, he can't pass the buck. If this were under any other name, it would be classed as formula 90s dance fodder.

The choice of tracks compiled on disc one calls his judgement into further doubt. The inclusion of Air Supply-like MOR such as 'Heal the World', 'Remember the Time' and 'I Just Can't Stop Loving You', alongside classic Jackson funk ('Billie Jean', 'Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'', 'Man in the Mirror', 'Rock With You', 'Beat It') defies explanation — and where the hell is 'Jam'?



Michael Jackson

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