



Beastie Boys

Beasties in 'Time to get Ill', the punk bashes of 'Heart Attack Man' and 'Time for Livin'', funky instrumentals like 'Sambrosa', and their trippy floater, 'Something's Got to Give'. Brilliant remixes and a taste of what makes their gigs frenzied and memorable, all for the price of an EP. Buy, buy, buy, before the retailers put the price up!

JOHN TAITE

BABES IN TOYLAND Nemesisters (Reprise)

Three of rock's kickin'est bitches return with a diverse and sometimes surprising album that's guaranteed to bite you once, then again, before you get the chance to bite it back. *Nemesisters* certainly is a harsh and dirty beast, and you may well hesitate before climbing on board; but give it the chance to deliver its growingly satisfying kicks, and you'll soon find it driving you just as capably as its predecessors do.

It's only fair to warn you of the surprises. Three almost unbelievable covers close *Nemesisters*. The first is a comically morose (or gratingly heartfelt, depending on your mood) rendering of Derek Corman's 'All By Myself' (betcha forgot that one ever breathed life into the airwaves!). The second is Lori Barbero's a cappella take on Billie Holliday's 'Deep Song'. The third, hold your breath, is a piano-and-all version of Sister Sledge's 'We Are Family' — and who better to sing it for the new breed of sisters than these Babes?

So, the soundtrack's arrived. Lock up your boyfriends, girls. It's time to play up again!

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

THE COMMODORES

The Best Of the Commodores (Motown)

Short of an exhaustive boxed set release, this 39-track, two CD *Commodores Best Of* is the ultimate 'hits' package. In chronological order, it traces the history of the six-piece funk/soul band from Tuskegee, Alabama, from *Machine Gun*, their first album for Motown, released in 1973, up until 1986's *United*, by which time the band had left the label and three original members behind.

Musically, the Commodores had split personalities. The best tracks on this compilation are drawn from their funk side. 'Young Girls Are My Weakness', 'Slippery When Wet', 'Fancy Dancer', 'Too Hot Too Trot', 'Old-Fashion Love', 'Lady (You Bring Me Up)', and of course 'Brickhouse' are all essential gifts from funk heaven. Their other face displayed the wholesome, bordering on MOR, ballads — 'Three Times A Lady', 'Still', 'Just To Be Close To You' — penned by Lionel Richie. These are an acquired taste.

With half the band "wanting to be as black as we could be", and the remainder pushing for crossover success in the US charts, it made for a wide variation in the Commodores' sound. They had no trademarks, and that's what makes them unique. It was Ritchie's desire to break through to a white audience that prompted his departure in 81. Although many thought this would be the end of the Commodores' phenomenal worldwide success, they hit back with the awesome Number 1 soul single 'Nightshift' in 1984.

It's difficult to do 'best of' compilations jus-

tice within the confines of a 200 word review. This is especially so in the case of the Commodores, because what they're offering is nothing short of black gold.

JOHN RUSSELL

CHRIS ISAAK Forever Blue (Reprise)

By his third album, *Heart Shaped World*, Chris Isaak had refined his sound to a perfect blend of aching voice, classic sounds and remarkable sparse and eerie guitar, playing great, sad songs — the most famous of which was, of course, 'Wicked Game'. The next album, *San Francisco Days*, applied similar ingredients to a collection of fine pop songs, and the result was a gem of a pop record.

Forever Blue retains the fuller, swinging sound of the previous albums, but plays a collection of songs unified by a running theme of sadness and loss. I read Isaak saying in an interview that all these songs are about breaking up with one specific girl, and that knowledge initially cast something of a creepy shadow over the album, particularly with the accusatory tone of the opening 'Baby Did a Bad Thing'. But the album displays the wide range of feelings that follow the break up of a relationship — anger, sadness, reminiscence, panic, contemplation of what went wrong, dealing with seeing the person again, hope that things could be rekindled, then the sad realisation that it really is all over — all in the progression of experiencing these feelings. Nevertheless, this isn't a miserable listening experience. The tracks vary in sound from bouncy pop songs, to aching torch songs and the dark, sparse, tremolo guitar-moulded vignettes that made *Heart Shaped World* my favourite Chris Isaak album.

Lyricaly, this is the most unified of his five albums — a remarkable journey of loss, sadness, grieving and resolution. The last song is the sad and final 'End of Everything', but it finishes with a quiet chirping of birds: the sun will come out, a new day, there is hope after all.

JONATHAN KING

LETTERS TO CLEO Aurora Gory Alice (Liberation)

THE MUFFS Blonder and Blonder (Reprise)

Letters to Cleo are everything Juliana Hatfield's solo career should've been; a sexy female vocal with more guts in the backing

band. Kay Hanley fronts this Boston four-piece (or five-piece, if you count the guy who 'drives the van and drinks beer', in the liner notes). They're very much of the Lemonheads/Hatfield Boston ilk. You know, the pinch of country to the guitar, the quirk to the lyrics, the very American feel to the pop.

'Here and Now' is the single you'll know them for, with that blah-dy blah, tongue twisting chorus that spits out: 'The comfort of a knowledge of a rise above the sky could never parallel the challenge of an acquisition in the here and now,' in just under five seconds. Scrappy pop, polite ballads ('Get On With It' and 'From Under the Dust') and a band name that refers to a pen-pal. That says it all.

Just like saying: 'The Muffs come from LA,' tells you plenty. This is the second album from this white trash trio. They do punk pop in that homogenised Green Day kind of way ('Agony' and 'Oh Nina') — not too surprising, as *Blonder's* producer was also behind *Dookie*. They do rock 'n' roll in a Crampsey, Ramonesy kind of way ('Red Eyed Troll' and 'Laying on a Bed of Roses'). Vocalist Kim Shattuck looks and sounds like Courtney Love's long lost sister, brandishing about guttural screams to punctuate the songs. Not overly inspiring, but there for convenience. Kind of like, um, a Big Mac.

JOHN TAITE



The Muffs

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