



Cul De Sac

albums

KING BISCUIT Sun Hits the Moon (Hark)

Hamilton's King Biscuit are a genius unto themselves. Few bands would ever attempt to augment the traditional guitar/bass/drums with saxophone, harmonica, violin, mandolin, trumpet and congas. Yet the results are mostly successful, and nothing if not intriguing.

By turns funky (the opening 'Sun Hits the Moon', 'Goin' Home'), reggae ('Time Makes it So'), and Irish folk (James K Baxter's 'Flanagan', 'Anzac Day'), it comes as no surprise that audience reactions have tended to be mixed (especially at cowboy theme bars). It is to the band's credit they have maintained such an exhaustive touring schedule over their five year history — small wonder their repertoire has become so well honed.

The problem they faced was to transfer the dynamism of their live shows to a studio environment. They needn't have worried. *Sun Hits the Moon* is one of the best produced local releases of the year and, in Mark Kingston, they possess a vocalist of rare quality.

MARK DONOVAN

THE MAD SCENE Sealight (Summershine/Flying In)

Like Baiterspace, the Mad Scene call New York City their home. But the Rotten Apple's future urban alienation atmosphere, that so suited Baiterspace, has not found a home in the Mad Scene's sound. Instead, they've set a mesh of jangly Dunedin sound up against the sparse, 60s pop sound of Oz/UK/NYC band the Moles.

Not coincidentally, Hamish Kilgour (also in the obscure Clean band) helped out on the final Moles album, and it shows on the less jangly songs like 'Gotta Get Back' and 'Black Flye', which include horns and are stripped back to just the essential notes.

The other singer/writer, Lisa Seagul, has that undeveloped, innocent singing style that is so very popular with the Flying Nun female gang — a lethargic, halfway to caring voice. The words reflect her slacker passion: 'I hope you call me up today / I want to hear that you're OK,' and 'Then I heard you say something / Really nice to me.'

Along with maturity comes wisdom and grumpiness, and this grumpiness is brought out in Everclear's songs dealing with boredom, frustration and living in crummy towns (no doubt bringing on boredom and frustration). Although never likely to shift bulk commodity, oldsters like Everclear will keep on churning out albums of quality guitar angst, fuelled by the bitterness of seeing bands like Green Day succeed. Only you, the public, can stop this cruel cycle.

KEVIN LIST

EDWYN COLLINS Gorgeous George (Setanta)

Singer-songwriters are back. It's unofficial, but this one is almost good enough to erase memories of the genre that encouraged the likes of James Taylor, Carly Simon, et al.

Ex-Orange, Juice Edwyn Collins is deservedly in the throes of commercial

rebirth, with the classic pop, jukebox perfection of the swinging 'A Girl Like You'. The brilliantly titled *Gorgeous George* is actually a re-issue from last year, a move no doubt calculated to cash-in on the single's British success. It's a fine album, but don't expect a succession of catchy dance-hall quiffs. At heart, Collins is a droll, understated pop commentator, whose included 'Campaign for Real Rock' totally destroys the prefabricated rock-by-numbers fashion that's currently killing rock 'n' roll. Don't miss *George* this time out.

GEORGE KAY

BATMAN FOREVER SOUNDTRACK Various Artists (Atlantic)

Yeah, yeah. You're thinking: 'Urghhh, the *Batman* soundtrack.' You're wondering why *RipItUp* would touch it. You're perversely curious at the atrocities within. That's natur-

al enough. I mean, the last two were appalling. But apart from U2's grandstanding 'Kill Me, Eat Me, Excrete Me' and Michael Hutchenson's abortive version of 'The Passenger', there is a whole bunch of cool indie stuff on this one.

PJ Harvey kicks off the strong line-up of alternative rock. There's some hard-out bizzo from the Offspring, seedy swathes of bluesy goth from Nick Cave, and the lugubrious country of Mazzy Star. On the dance side of things, Massive Attack contribute a sultry and haunting version of the Smokey Robinson penned 'The Hunter Gets Captured By the Game', using Tracy Thorn's mouthwatering vocals, once again. Wu Tang Clan's Method Man gruffs and tuffs all over 'The Riddler', and there's even a spot of Seal and Brandy for the more MOR types out there.

Riddle me this, riddle me that...

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