

albums



Joy Division

It's another laidback, enjoyable album — the sort Kilgour and cohorts seem to be able to turn out in their sleep. If you want something to blow your mind, then try someplace else. Words like comfy, warm and mellow are never far from reach.

DARREN MITCHELL HAWKES

JOY DIVISION Permanent (Polydor)

May this year marked the fifteenth anniversary of the suicide of Joy Division's singer Ian Curtis. It is not total coincidence that this 'best of' is now being released. The thing is, Joy Division's output was not that large: two proper albums ('Unknown Pleasures' and 'Closer') and two albums that had live and rare tracks ('Still' and 'Substance'). I guess 'best ofs' have been released on bands with even smaller back catalogues.

Permanent takes three songs from *Unknown Pleasures* and *Still* and four from *Closer*, plus the three singles and B-sides. There's a smattering from everything Joy Division did, but no over-riding theme. Nonetheless, Joy Division always stayed close to their synth/bass roots, so the compilation remains cohesive. The bonus track to force train spotters to buy it is the 'Permanent Mix' of 'Love Will Tear Us Apart'. Curtis' widow apparently does not like nor approve of it, but only obsessives will be able to differentiate it from the original.

For the youngsters, Joy Division were very popular a few years back because of their pop songs mixed with Ian Curtis' doom and

gloom, angsty lyrics. He killed himself and the band called themselves New Order. This album is an accessible entry into the works of Joy Division.

DARREN MITCHELL HAWKES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Celtic Heartbeat Collection (Celtic Heartbeat)

ANÚNA Anúna (Celtic Heartbeat)

BILL WHELAN Riverdance (Celtic Heartbeat)

FRANCES BLACK Talk to Me (Celtic Heartbeat)

ALEC FINN Blue Shamrock (Celtic Heartbeat)

PATRICK CASSIDY The Children of Lir (Celtic Heartbeat)

So, the Celtic revolution/renaissance starts here, with a gamut of releases on U2 manager Paul McGuinness' Celtic Heartbeat label. The obvious place to start is with the *Collection*, which is a tasty representative glimpse of what the label has to offer. Liam O'Flynn's 'The Winter's End' and ex-Planxty Andy Irvine's 'Chetvorna' alone justify the price of the *Collection*.

To the individual albums, and surprisingly the pick of the bunch is *Anúna*. Surprisingly, because a 15 strong Celtic choir doesn't sound like too electrifying a prospect, but

their pagan, monastic arrangements and moods are incredibly haunting.

Journeyman Bill Whelan's *Riverdance* has deservedly led to a hit stage show. It's an ideal vehicle for displaying the variety of Celtic and other ethnic groupings' instrumental styles. World music par excellence.

Next up, Frances Black's first solo album, *Talk to Me*, has already made it big in Ireland. Her rich country/folk vocals are a touch sentimental for my battered ears, but her talent and distinctiveness are undeniable.

Guitarist and bouzouki player Alec Finn contributes his first solo album, *Blue Shamrock* — a collection of delicate and evocative traditional instrumentals, particularly effective when Mary Bergin joins him on tin whistle. Finally, there's Patrick Cassidy with the London Symphony Orchestra at his back, interpreting the Irish tale of *The Children of Lir*.

This collection is lush, and maybe a bit too cultured for my pagan instincts, but these are minor flaws of over refinement that McGuinness hopes to redress with the introduction of the more anarchic side of Celtic in his next batch of releases. For now, just enjoy the Gaelic pulse.

GEORGE KAY

CATHERINE WHEEL Happy Days (Fontana)

Their first album back in 1992 had the appropriate title of *Ferment* — for that is exactly what it did. At the time it was inappropriately lumped into the English shoe-gazing scene. They followed it with 93's *Chrome*, which was total auto-pilot. Since then they've been touring the States, getting hard.

'Take this huge expanse of sound,' instructs new single 'Waydown'. *Happy Days* sees them continue their school of hard rock, much in the same vein as Therapy?, Swervedriver or Shihad. Even Iron Maiden's Bruce Dickinson is a fan, or maybe it's just that his cousin happens to be the lead singer.

Drummer Sims thumps away on a solid 4/4 beat through every song, and Rob Dickinson has a steady, unyielding voice that leads the tune-filled riff-centric songs. There's nothing remotely radical about their sound, it's just so goddamn rock solid — from the Neil Young styled 'Heal' to 'Hole', the obligatory Kurt Cobain song, to the poppy duet with Belly's Tanya Donnelly, 'Judy Staring at the Sun'.

While the cover screams out 'Bargain Bin!', and that is where their previous two albums ended, it deserves a home elsewhere, er... at your home, most definitely.

DARREN MITCHELL HAWKES

VARIOUS Totally Wired 12 (Acid Jazz)

SNOWBOY AND THE LATIN SELECTION Best Of (Acid Jazz)

MENASSEH MEETS THE EQUALISER Dub the Millenium (Acid Jazz)

THE DREAD FLIMSTONE SOUND The Bionic Dread (Acid Jazz)

It's one thing to listen to acid jazz, you know, the odd bit of Brit funk retro fumbings. But it's another if you live for the stuff, buy the Jamaroquai hats, spend Sunday arvos living around to vinyl in day-glo suburban houses. Best stop reading if you're the latter.

If you thought acid jazz came and went in a month a couple of years ago (like the rest of the planet), *Totally Wired 12* is proof it's still kicking around, battling musical fashion by diversifying. The Brand New Heavies sit alongside Primal Scream ('Funky Jam' ha, ha). There's Dub War, who rap over their funk rock, the Swinging Foot's spoken word jazz and Simon Bartholomew, who sounds close to breaking into the CHiPs theme with his instrumental. There's that sort of thing, anyway.

The Best Of Snowboy And The Latin Selection is one for those pining for the LA nightclub scene in the 40s and 50s. Congas, bongos, samba beats and all variety of Latino carry on. The compilation takes the best of Snowboy's *Ritmo Snowbo*, *Descargo Mambito* and *Something's Coming*, 10 years of Mark Cotgrove's jazzy, percussive originals, and odd cover versions ('The Flintstones', sure, but 'Anarchy in the UK'?). Nice for a spicy change.



Catherine Wheel

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