



# albums

Aerosmith sound, but really, the sound quality is frustratingly poor in places. Yeah, yeah — I know about the low-fi aesthetic and all that, but we're talking sub-fi in places here. Kindred spirit Chris Knox's recent home-recorded *Songs Of You And Me* was a fine example of the sort of clarity and balance that can be achieved by a no compromise/no budget recording. Perhaps he should produce Guided By Voices' next album.

As much as the band may crave anonymity in their music making, if they're only making music for themselves, then why bother to release it at all? Surely the main reason is to get that music out to like-minded souls beyond the band's own garage/home-town/country/planet/whatever, and having to wade through *Alien Lanes'* low-fi shambles won't help that cause.

In spite of this, there's no denying the powerful rough-diamond appeal of *Alien*

*Lanes* and *Box* (abridged). Spanning eight years, these two CDs stand as a remarkably consistent and vital document of the frustrating genius that is Guided By Voices.

MARTIN BELL

## THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS Exit Planet Dust (Virgin)

It's not surprising though, is it? No matter how sincere the flattery, if you pinch someone's else's name and release records with it, there's gonna be trouble. So the Dust Brothers became the Chemical Brothers this year, after their American counterparts threatened to kick 17 different shades of shit out of them in court.

And here they are, serving up soundscapes to get shitfaced to, sweat inducing groove monsters, and anything that'll help you party for your right to smarty and stuff. *Sabres of Paradise* and *Bomb the Bass* are

the points of reference you need to suss the Chemical Brothers. Booming beats with scratched up samples, sirens and synths.

Most of the song titles are mood indicators more than anything: 'Fuck Up Beats', 'Chemical Beats' and 'Chico's Groove'. But the crusty beats with the ray-gun squeal and the Tin Man-on-a-torturing-rack within 'Playground For the Wedgeless Fan', and the digitised funk kicker 'Leave Home' are the hookers that'll lead you to lewd behaviour. The rest will fill in those late night hours you always seem to lose track of.

Hip-hopped house with truck loads of nouse.

JOHN TAITE

## BUFFALO TOM Sleepy Eyed (Beggars Banquet)

Deep in the throes of Winter as we are, 'Summer' is breakin' my slacker heart. You can sail on its gentle waves of wibbly-wobbly guitars, then thrash it out at the chorus, waving your hanky nostalgically all the while. What more can you ask for? Well, there's plenty more where that came from on *Sleepy Eyed*.

Seasons irrespective, Chris Colbourn's plaintive vocals on 'Twenty Points' (subtitled 'The Ballad of Sexual Dependency') will have you sucking your thumb and wiping your nose on the nearest snuggle rug. That's exactly the kind of bolt from the not entirely blue this familiar-in-a-nice-way album sets you up so perfectly for. Likewise, at the

opposite end of the scale, is the riff-o-matic 'Your Stripes'.

Bill Janovitz's second chance (after 'Summer') to shine like he can in the vocal department comes on 'Sparklers', which he takes and runs. That's the thing with Buffalo Tom: they won't shove their prowess in your face, but you can't help but love them for it anyway.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

## THE VERVE A Northern Soul (Hut)

Listening to the Verve used to be about enveloping escapism, like they'd encased the world in a glass bubble and you could watch the slow-motion madness from the outside. You know, they were a band reviewers loved to poetically toss off about.

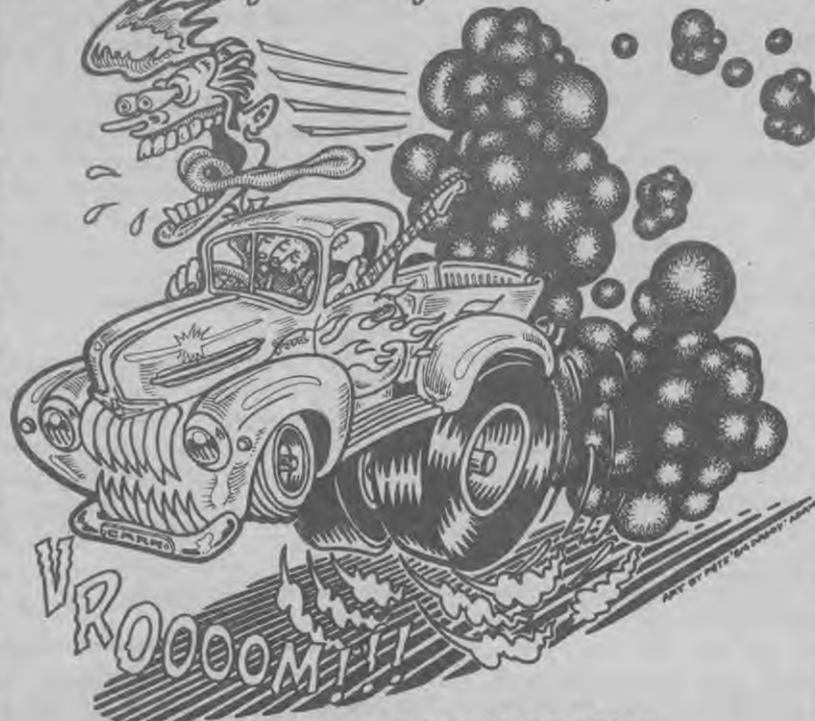
Well, there's still plenty of opportunity for that, but if *A Storm In Heaven* was driving around nuclear reactors in the fog, *A Northern Soul* is a tour bus that's broken down outside a coffee and cigarettes diner. Yup, it seems that America has hit the Verve in the rock 'n' roll way and, if anything, it's given them a more distinct bunch of songs.

The single, 'This is Music', suggested they'd snapped out of their coma, and 'A New Decade' and the title track are both LDOPA awakenings. 'On Your Own' takes its lead from Bobby Gillespie, with the acoustic, the hand claps and: 'All I want is someone who will fill the hole in the life I've known.' 'History' takes a string section and fakes an



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