

albums



Joan Jett

orgasm — not the best song in the world, but at least they're experimenting. And there's 'Brainstorm Interlude', which reveals Nick McCabe's libidinous guitar handling and, erm, Ashcroft's desire to be transported via satellite... or something. There's 'So It Goes' and 'Drive You Home', for the fans of the old style, and 'Stormy Clouds', with its reprise amounting to 12 minutes of their floaty jam feel.

A *Northern Soul* is exciting because it points to where they can go. Onwards and upwards. No glass bubbles required.

JOHN TAITE

JOAN JETT AND THE BLACKHEARTS Pure and Simple (Liberation)

It was some 13 years ago that Joan Jett first proclaimed that she did indeed love rock 'n' roll, from the stage of CBGB's, and that collision of 70s metal and 60s pop which was her best and biggest hit was proof in itself. Her historical importance too is unquestionable — the first riot grrrl, god-mother of punk rock, what you will — but whatever it is Joan loves in 1995, it isn't rock 'n' roll. Sure, the tunes on *Pure and Simple* sound like rock 'n' roll, but the spirit

just ain't there, and things hit an all time low when Joan goes over all worried about the state of the nation in 'Wonderin'' and the execrable 'Brighter Day'. 'Go Home' and the bitchy 'Spinster' show there's still plenty of bite to her voice, but the punk-by-numbers playing of the Blackhearts make even these sound leaden. I'm still wondering what the six producers credited here actually did for their money.

GREG FLEMING

WHALE We Care (Hut)

You've gotta hand it to a bad girl who looks good crawling around in a see-through white, stretch fabric dress with large white underwear underneath. Chutzpah, is the word you've gotta hand her. Likewise with a band who scratch *Vitalogy* in the same video ('Pay For Me').

Okay, Whale are Swedish, but let's not typecast. Anyway, where ABBA smacked of matching outfits, Whale reek of something a lot less chaste — sex. The album's first lyric is: 'I wanna give birth to your baby, baby,' and the salaciously psychopathic Cia Berg sings about the acts that might make this



Whale

VARIOUS ARTISTS The Deseo Remixes (WH Records)

VARIOUS ARTISTS Creative, Innovative, Uncompromising (Nation Records)

I must admit, I've never heard of the Deseo project. Probably just as well, seeing as Jon Anderson (lead singer in boring rock dinosaurs Yes) was behind it. Phew, him and some Latin American musos — can you imagine the worthy bollocks that would produce? Anyway, they were remixed by Future Sound Of London, Global Communication and two groups definitely not renowned for their re-mixing (Transglobal Underground and Deep 'Froggy' Forest). Dull, dull, dull, dull. The best track of the album is FSOL's 'Deseo Reconstruction', because it strips the original of everything it had (one would assume) and does the ambi thing all over the place. Everyone else just worked with what they were given: toe jam.

On the other hand, *Creative Innovative Uncompromising* is just that — nearly. If you're a fan of the Eastern/Western sound mix, the UK versions of world hip-house like Transglobal Underground and Fun-Da-Mental (both included here), this will make you drool: 12 tracks that straddle the ethnicity/musical borders.

Mostly instrumental, these tracks don't rely on the clichéd weird sounds with wailing vocal samples; there's a new wave of fusion between old world instrumentals and dance floor grind happening here. The throbbing, pumping, dusty grooves provided by Heliopolis and Tribal Drift add to the groups you're more familiar with. As far as ethno goes, this is just what the witch doctor ordered.

JOHN TAITE

CUL DE SAC I Don't Want to Go to Bed (Flying Nun)

The expansion of Flying Nun to overseas bands is proving an interesting proposition. After the unquestionably famous Ween, Boston's Cul de Sac may seem terribly obscure (and they are), but their first album, *Ecim*, was unanimously loved by the critics — though that's not necessarily a recommendation.

Cul de Sac is heavily influenced by the 70s Kraut rock of bands like Neu, Faust and Can. But Cul de Sac add their own influences: American folk-singers, Middle Eastern music, and the addition of guitarist Glenn Jones' 'Contraption', which is a lap-steel guitar, wedged with implements, tuned at random and played through effects boxes. This totally instrumental album is recorded on two-tracks of a barely functioning, bottom of the line, four-track recorder. Sound grim? Well, sometimes.

The sound is based on locking into a hypnotic groove through various organic sounds and instruments. To achieve this, the songs all last forever. In the case of 'Doldrums', the incredible rhythm found keeps the track fascinating for its whole 10 minutes. But other songs, like 'Graveyard for Robots', become a flat, dull, and yes, irritating experience.

I Don't Want to Go to Bed reveals its live jam origins and can be an uninspired, plodding, ugly beast. At other times, Cul de Sac slip into the groove and a psychedelic panorama emerges. Disquieting, disconcerting, discordant and occasionally beautiful.

DARREN MITCHELL HAWKES

EVERCLEAR Sparkle and Fade Capitol Records

Everclear are three decent, honest American boys whose decent, honest lives have unfortunately got tangled up in the murky, sordid world of wild rock and roll. Well, maybe they were dishonest, indecent American boys, but they've definitely got themselves tangled up with rock and roll. Although, come to think of it, their particular brand isn't too wild. Once upon a time, Everclear may, in fact, have been wild and raucous, but now one's a dad and they've got a record deal after years of scungy foot and mouth living. This album seems to be their coming of age effort.

KEVIN LIST

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