



Prick

alyptic 'Psychosis' and 'Tonight is a Special Nite' (Chaos Mass Confusion Mix'). The former is deeply unsettling, particularly as Adrian (aka Tricky) comes to the realisation that 'it seems, I'm the Devil's son', and the Grim Reaper's 'this is a warning' loops on in the background. 'Tonight is a Special Nite' mixes up some yummy late night keyboards with rat-a-tatting drum beats and the vocals of Tricky, Rza, The Grim Reaper and The Gatekeeper. The collaboration tracks are apparently the result of mutual respect and a late night drinking session. The wild vocals on the latter track certainly point to the latter reason for this unholy union.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

FOETUS Gash
(Columbia)

After a pretty decent hiatus to create this, Jim Thirwell has finally made major label status with a pretty uncompromising record. It's Foetus with no punches pulled — lots of unrelenting beats and some loops that verge on white noise. Thirwell is far more flexible than he is usually given credit for however, and this time he's put all that on one album. There's a range from the techno on PCP vibe of 'Verklemmt' to the very cool 90s big band sound of 'Slung', where Thirwell actually uses a big band. (It's a good one too — Marc Ribot is in there with members of Unsane and others.) Hopefully kids will hear this and realise Gash is what Nine Inch Nails and cohorts would sound like if they lost the fellow traveller posturing and Gothic conceits in favour of some musical firepower, but I doubt it. What Columbia thought they were getting with Foetus, I have no idea; but they put the damn thing out, so more power to them.

KIRK GEE

VARIOUS ARTISTS Jazzmatazz II
(Chrysalis)

Gang Starr's Guru is back again, this time with jazzy hip-hop that not only straddles the generations, but the Atlantic as well. The concept this time round is big names and newbies from hip-hop and acid jazz's realms, mixing it up with their jazzy forefathers. Guru, of course, directs it all: Guru the responsible role model, Guru the ego driven control freak.

Why bother using heavenly vocalists like Shara Nelson and Mica Paris if you're going to restrict them to back up singing? It's hardly a collaboration when the focus is Guru telling The Kids to put down the guns and pick up some culture, again. And when he uses the musicians from the UK (Courtney Pine and Ronny Jordan, amongst others), they sound like they've been slotted in a gap, or they're

drowned out by the hip-hop.

There's more energy and freedom in the American fusions. 'Respect to the Architect' throws Guru up against the liquid lyrical style of that she-devil Bahamadia. Backed by the wibbles of DJ Scratch and the old school jazz of Ramsey Lewis on piano and Moog, it's exactly what the project promised. And there are some pleasant surprises, like the Vandross-style 'Something In the Past', with Mr Elam trying his hand at a spot of crooning.

For every Chaka Khan-type chunder, there's a melting moment like Me'Shelle. And in a sample-free zone, where Donald Bird and Branford Marsalis create free range grooves, Guru couldn't mess it up if he tried.

JOHN TAITE

ED KUEPPER
A King in the Kindness Room (Hot)

DAVE GRANEY AND THE CORAL SNAKES
The Soft 'n' Sexy Sound (Mercury)

Aussie time means Mister Ed's annual album, which is a mixture of the unusual and the superfluous. His reliable, enigmatic, acoustic introspections are still there in 'Messin Pt 2' etc., and he's successfully added his own haunted soul to ACDC's 'Highway to Soul' and Gordon Lightfoot's 'Sundown'. But the core of the record belongs to the nine-minute jazzy instrumental 'They Call Me Mr Sexy', and it's a touch tedious, a crucial flaw, especially when Kuepper's other songs like 'Space Pirate' can't recover the album's momentum or shape.

No such problems for Dave Graney, who's steadily emerging from anonymity to rival the likes of Nick Cave as Australia's premier outside crooner. With a title that's self-explanatory, Graney and the Coral Snakes have produced an album that scarcely lapses from the standard of the lush, melancholic feel of torch songs like the brilliant 'Deep Inside A Song'. On 'Morrison Floorshow' he sparks up a wonderfully R&B sorta narrative, but elsewhere the spell's as seductive as a snake.

GEORGE KAY

BLIND MELON Soup
(Capitol)

If you purchased Blind Melon's eponymously titled debut album and 'enjoyed' it, there is no conceivable reason why you would not find *Soup* equally pleasant. This sophomore effort is jazzier and less tied to traditional song structure than was their first.

Lyrical, the band have improved and dealt with some pretty dark subject matter, especially on 'Skinned', an attempt to dissect the men-

talities of serial killer Ed Gein, which contains some choice lyrics: 'Hey, I could really use a couple of hands, to complete one hell of a plant stand.'

BM's cross-pollination of roots, rhythm and rebellion remains very much intact. Unfortunately, so do Shannon Hoon's vocals (imagine how Yes' Jon Anderson would sound, post-wedgie) and maddeningly cute delivery. It's hard to knock a band who are obviously such nice souls, but *Soup* is so utterly devoid of febricity as to render it... 'God-Fodder'?

MARK DONOVAN

PRICK Prick
(Interscope)

Trent Reznor really is pushing his luck. First he tries to rehabilitate the career of Adam Ant, whom most of us hoped had become a mere footnote in rock, now he brings us his latest project.

Reznor has not only released this on his own vanity label, but he seems to have influenced every breath this guy takes. This record is pure NIN — lots of dense multi-tracked guitars, drum machines galore, plenty of angst-ridden screaming with a buckload of distortion on everything. Mr Reznor, however, has a few ideas as to song construction, writing hooks and giving the whole Industrodoodoo thing a sense of drama.

Mr Prick has no ideas, so he hammers through everything at break-neck pace, and each song blends into another until you throw the thing across the room. Basically, the one line review reads: You could fire a sawn-off Mossberg loaded with birdshit at this Prick and not hit a single original idea.

KIRK GEE

LEE 'SCRATCH' PERRY AND MAD PROFESSOR
Black Ark Experiments (Ariwa/Chant)

There's a subtle charm to *Black Ark Experiments*, the first collaboration between these two reggae legends since the highly acclaimed *Mystic Warrior*.

Like others, I wasn't impressed on first listening, but it definitely grows on you. Perry's distinctive hoarse growl floats above, in and around the computer-driven rhythms of the Mad Professor, raving on in his usual style.

'Super Ape in Good Shape' finds him back on the familiar topic of world banking institutions. Scratch thinks they're the root of all evil. 'Open Door' seems to be a lament for bands now consigned to history. 'Ask Peter Tosh,' says Scratch. 'Open Clash door / Open Wallers door.'

There's a theory that Scratch's madness is

just a front to get rid of the botherers. This set of songs does nothing to dispel the image. The grab bag of words just gets more and more chaotic. But then, that's part of the charm. And it's that chaos and the Professor's light touch on the control panel that make *Black Ark Experiments* unlike anything else in the reggae genre at the moment.

Everything's dead simple. Just good rhythms, Scratch's raving, flute, horns and the odd dub. It's like these two have been around reggae rhythms so long, they don't feel the need to shake it all up. They just stick to what they know well — and it shows.

MARK REVINGTON

BARRY SAUNDERS Weatherman
(Pagan)

The elements (sun, sky, sea) are constants in Saunders' songs on *Weatherman* — his first self-penned solo record. It has a meditative, introspective quality about it, which recalls the later work of Merle Haggard, or, closer to home, the poetry of fellow Wellingtonian Sam Hunt. The easy swagger of Saunders' old band, The Warratahs, is absent, and *Weatherman* is of a darker hue lyrically: 'I thought I was on the safe side of the river this time / Now I'm realising it's time to sink or swim,' begins the first single, 'Brave Face', (a song which contains my favourite couplet: 'I'm as shattered as broken dishes / She's as steady as the Southern Cross'). Musically too, the songs are a back to basics affair (at times perhaps a little too bare), with Saunders' acoustic guitar and vocals taking the lead throughout — a touch of Hammond organ, some mandolin and the odd female backing vocal affording the only distraction from the band (which include ex-Warratah Clint Brown on bass and Jan Hellriegel's Wayne Bell on drums).

'Winter Sun' is a classic; a song which at first appears a little out of Saunders' vocal range, but one which he rescues with breathtaking emotional candour. 'Each Other's Lives' and 'White Island' trace the arc of similar (if not the same) personal relationships, while 'Riverina' (named after the old Hamilton Hotel) and 'Little Times' seem to deal with Saunders' time with the Warratahs — both good and bad. 'Olio' attempts to end the album on a lighter note (it's a lovely portrait of a taxi-driver who kept picking Saunders up one week), but *Weatherman*'s strength is when it deals with both a public and private past. As he ad libs on 'You Can't Go Back': 'Visiblity's good tonight / I can see things the way they really are.' Songs as good as these really are worth remembering.

GREG FLEMING

THAT DOG Totally Crushed Out
(Geffen)

I haven't heard their first album, so I can't say if they've changed. But I can tell you that at first listen That Dog's vocalist, Anna Waronker, sounds like Liz Phair, and that when Petra and Rachel (violin and bass respectively) sing along, they surprise you with these sweet harmonies that you wouldn't expect from an LA rock unit. Then, just as Petra's bunny rabbit violin is soothed by the harmonies, they're both ripped apart by Anna's angered screams and rabid dog guitar. It's an interesting mix.

I can tell you their single, 'He's Kissing Christian', has got this cool spin-the-bottle video, and that it looks like the mid 90s slack/grunge/jungle/punk yanks are reclaiming 50s kitch (though Weezer got there first with 'Buddy Holly'), as they wallow in crushes, heartache, depression and pain.

I can tell you *Totally Crushed Out* is the perfect musical accompaniment to Wurtzel's *Prozac Nation* — depressed, angry and disillusioned. It's the real America, for the kids whose lives aren't sit-coms. Take 'Anymore', a sure sign everybody's hurting. Then there's 'To Keep Me' — 'It's time to shut off, it's time to

David Bowie

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