

# albums



Morrissey

Elvis Costello, who knows a thing or two, regards *Dusty in Memphis* as one of the two greatest albums ever recorded on Atlantic (the other being Aretha Franklin's label debut). A *Very Fine Love* marks Dusty's signing to Columbia by a director who 'wanted to bring her into the 90s'. What this, in effect, means is we get an album of slushy MOR that assumes Dusty's fans want to hear her exquisite voice in arrangements and production tailored for Radio 1. No, thank you. After all, a few years back the Pet Shop Boys proved she could be brought triumphantly up to date with such tracks as 'Nothing Has Been Proved', from the movie *Scandal*.

Ironically, two recent movie soundtracks also highlight the Memphis/Nashville contrast. While 'Son of a Preacher Man' lent its timeless beauty to *Pulp Fiction*, the current album's saccharine duet with Daryl Hall plays during the closing credits of *While You Were Sleeping*. Compare those movies for an idea of the distance between

Dusty's recordings in the two cities.

PETER THOMSON

**THE GERALDINE FIBBERS**  
Lost Somewhere Between  
The Earth And My Home  
(Virgin)

This is an album I knew full well would be great before I heard a note. Not because every time I've seen this band live they've been exceptional, from sweet country tinged rock shows to some very dark and intense nights. Not because their various indie vinyl releases have proven they are probably the only band since the United States of America who can actually use a violinist in a rock context without sounding hokey. The reason being, this record features the vocal talents of ex-Ethyl Meatplover vocalist Carla Bozulich, who possesses one of the finest throats this side of Polly Jean Harvey. Bozulich can shift effortlessly from a throaty purr to a full blown howl, while the rest of the

Fibbers pace her every step of the way. A double bass and the aforementioned viola/violinist give a strangely rootsy feel to the edgy guitar squall that is kicked up, and Ms Carla does her thing to make it all near perfect.

She really throws herself into this stuff, and the great moments like 'Dragon Lady' or 'Lilybelle', are almost operatic in their intensity levels.

A fine, fine album here, perhaps only marred because the band didn't include their stomping version of 'Jolene' — but that gives you an excuse to go buy that old fashioned 10 inch vinyl stuff.

KIRK GEE

**MORRISSEY**  
Southpaw Grammar (RCA)

The Queen Mum of indie is here again. Same band, same voice, with a different label and different style. *Southpaw* is far less poppy than we were becoming used to. All the rockabilly and glam is long gone, but it seems all the great tunes and lyrics that characterised *Vauxhall* and I have been thrown to the bulldogs as well. The lad seems to be after a bit of rock and stroll — which is the only way you could describe 'Do Your Best And Don't Worry' (as awful as its title is defeatist). The 11-minute 'Teachers Are Afraid of the Pupils' is a muddled joke akin to 'November Spawned a Monster', and 'The Operation' starts out with a two minute drum solo! There sure is a lot of padding on this eight track album.

Two tracks glitter out of the mud: 'Best Friend on the Payroll', that starts out: 'I turn the music down, but I don't know why — this is my house!', and the latest single. But you only need to compare the spiteful 'Dagenham Dave' with his last single, the sad but hopeful 'Boxers', to see something has grassed poor old Moz up the wrong way. Either that or he's just focussing on the States and he thought he needed to get a bit harder, or something equally ridiculous.

*Southpaw* is darker, but not in the broody way that I guess he would have liked. It sounds as if someone has stolen all the light bulbs.

JOHN TAITE

**URGE OVERKILL**  
Exit The Dragon (Geffen)

A few heated arguments probably took place in the Geffen offices

Record Company Man: "Put 'Girl You'll Be a Woman' on the album, you difficult bastards!"

"But it's just a dodgy old B-side made cool by Quentin Tarantino," plead Urge.

UO surprisingly beat The Man, which will mean less sales. As if they care.

UO represent the new rock, the rock it's OK to like, Teenage Fanclub and the Black Crowes live on either side. It takes a fine-tuned ear to sometimes tell the difference between these bands and AOR hell. Sometimes that fine line is crossed. Not so in the honey-dripping single 'Somebody Else's Body', with its fine, almost rockabilly, rhythm, and the lyrical skills of: 'Education's dead / I knew the answers / They had all the questions wrong.' Nor is anything wrong in the Shihad versus Nirvana of 'This Is No Place', or the on the road ballad that is 'The Mistake', where Urge come close to tinglyness.

But sometimes things go wrong, and it's like being stuck in Wairoa without tapes. The rock-by-numbers chorus of 'Take Me' — 'Whoaaaa / T-take me / Take me back again...' — and the horrible stadium rocker, 'Need Some Air', as 1000 arms punch the air. These low points are few though.

The production is so rich and warm Nash Kato's vocals sound like he's dribbling honey straight into your ear, guitars chime, the big Aerosmith drum sound abounds — you know, all that classic stuff. The result makes *Exit the Dragon* unbearably listenable when you're: A) in a good mood, or B) want to be.

MITCHELL HAWKES

**LABRADFORD**  
A Stable Reference (Flying Nun)

Well, don't play this if you're hyper or happy. In fact, if you don't feel like life is a gaping chasm of gloom, it's probably best to just say 'no' to Labradford. Miserablism, that's what it's all about — no drums, just desolate guitars and

death croak vocals over slow-mo nuclear explosions and ambient mist (that is, ahem, keyboards).

They're one of Flying Nun's first batch of signings outside New Zealand. Yup, the Nun is spreading her wings to include a handful of the US and UK's weird progressive sound merchants.

This is the second album from this American trio. Without going into specifics, they're an ambient band. They're into Can and stuff like that. Their sound makes you feel as if the walls are closing in, or like you're stumbling around in a WWI mustard gassed trench. Needless to say, they don't sing the 'Happy Happy, Joy Joy' song very often.

JOHN TAITE

**SHAGGY** Boombastic  
(Virgin)

So, it's two years since 'Oh Carolina', and the man who put the muff back into raggamuffin, the man who whipped the Polynesian clothing industry into a frenzy (they call him Mr Lava Lava, apparently), has got more raggafied hip-hop hits for us. And he still sounds like middle-aged baritone who's seen squillions of whisky mornings and ganja afternoons.

What have we got? 'Boombastic' doesn't need mentioning, it's already massive everywhere — people are even learning the dance! And you already know the fun version of 'In the Summertime'. 'Something Different' has got a smooth groove, with vocalist Wayne Wonder sounding like Maxi Priest, and Shaggy wiggling out: 'She want a rub a dub a lover have a under cover.' 'Jenny' is a lounging lizard with a funny crooner chorus. And as if the Levis commercial wasn't enough, he's gone and covered the Just Juice song, 'Day Oh', with an amusing explanation for some of Harry Belafonte's ambiguous lyrics: 'Make sure you got a girl or a man gonna mouth (tease) you.'

On the down side, some of Shaggy's collaborators are a bit dodgy, namely on 'Heartbreak Suzie' (with Gold Mine) and 'The Train Is Coming' (with Ken Booth). You can't always say he should stick to the solo stuff either, because 'Forgive them Father' and 'Finger Smith' are just monotone

ragga drones over repetitive backbeats. But Summer is just around the corner, so we'll forgive him, because most of the time *Boombastic* goes 'boom'.

JOHN TAITE

**VARIOUS ARTISTS** Disturbed  
(IMD)

Well, here's a journey through some of what's happening in Dunedin at the moment. Here are 17 songs by some well-known and not so well-known faces. Chug, Jay Clarkson, Martin Phillipps and April Fools (David Kilgour et al), among others, represent some of the older stable; the likes of HDU, Suka, Cloudboy and company, some of the new.

Highlights? Well, Martin Phillipps gets deranged with a Cook Island percussion group and produces the brilliant 'Jungle Law'; HDU's 'Abstinence' is mind-blowing; Kathy Bull's 'Starfish' is the best pop song I've heard in ages; along with Sandra Bell's crushing 'Gilt', Suka's damaged epic 'Rode with the Moths', and Tane Griffin's 'Sepia Green'.

Actually, there's only two tracks here I'd classify as duds; April Fools' 'Under Your Face' (David Kilgour's not really doing much for me at present), and Graeme Downes' 'Front Row Centre' (which is too over-orchestrated, too bland, to really shake things up). Nonetheless, *Disturbed* is a well balanced, well presented compilation, with plenty of great songs and a sexy cover layout to boot. Thoroughly recommended.

SHAUN JURY

**PORTASTATIC**  
Slow Note From A Sinking Ship  
(Merge)

Portastatic is Mac from SuperChunk solo, aided and abetted by a few select friends on the occasional cut. A mixture of four-track and studio recordings, *Slow Note From a Sinking Ship* has an easygoing charm which recalls the Go-Betweens (on 'When You Crashed'), the lo-fi shenanigans of Guided By Voices (on 'The Angels of Sleep'), and the pastoral side of Chris Knox. In fact, with its Casiotone keyboards and Samsonite vanity case and cardboard box rhythm tracks, there's

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