

# albums



Portastatic

more than a hint of the jandal-wearing one on these recordings. However the album lacks the inspired sense of melody and the lyrical twists Knox brings to the best of his work.

The undistinguished vocals ultimately count against the net result. However, with the album's smattering of magical moments, Portastatic count as something more than just a solo folly. On 'Pastime', Mac asks: 'Wasn't that life changing for you?' *Slow Note From A Sinking Ship* is unlikely to change your life, but that doesn't mean it's not worthwhile.

MARTIN BELL

## DIRTY THREE Dirty Three (Touch & Go)

There's a 'Saint Kilda boys make good in the big, wide world' story here. Armed with a strange line-up (violin, guitar and drums) and some sweeping, dramatic songs, an instrumental band from Melbourne has got the US indie world listening. The musicians involved here have the capabilities of creating a truly noisy distortion-fest, which they happily do, but they can also create some very awesome soundscapes. When the Dirty Three really get moving, like on 'Indian Love Song' (and just about every other track here), they can best be described as finding the common ground between minimalist drone violinist Tony Conrad, Albert Ayler, on an improvisational bent, and noiseniks Big Black.

There's a solid, visceral sound to this record, but violinist Warren Ellis is perfectly capable of taking you on a few very strange sonic trips. *Dirty Three* is one of those albums that really makes me wonder why anyone wants to listen to anything lo-fi. It's a bunch of great

songs, played beautifully by musicians who are willing to experiment and are capable of making those experiments work. I have a feeling they were the only thing worth seeing at Lollapalooza this year.

KIRK GEE

## REEF Replenish (Sony)

Coming at ya, straight outta Glastonbury are the youthful Reef. Young, they may be, but their music is rooted in a different time, a time of elves and fairies and hobgoblins and the Tomorrow People. Song after song lumbers along in a stodgy, good lovin', good rockin' way. The music is not a million light years from the sort of vibes peddled by American noise mechanics Kyuss, but the attitude and affected 'Plantian' singing are where Reef fall down. The worst excess of Zeppelinism is the appalling 'Mellow', which made this listener feel anything but. Luckily for *Replenish*, most songs are loud and pumpin' enough to save you paying too much notice to the lyrics and vocal doo-doo.

If Reef possessed a sense of humour, like those madcap sideboard cultivators Supergrass, this brand of retro might seem easier to wallow in. As it is, Reef come across as a sort of English Black Crowes, paying homage to Led Zep rather than the Stones.

KEV LIST

## SWARM Forever Bled Hollow (JMD)

This here's the long-awaited first offering by Dunedin's Swarm; an often brutal, sometimes bizarre, but ultimately satisfying encounter in 15 parts. Recorded over the years 1993 and 1994, it's more of

a compilation than an actual album, but don't let that detail distract.

The live favourites — 'Broken Spine', 'Migration', 'Disciples for the Sky' et cetera — are of a more metallic/industrial variety, delivered in a furious manner, while the likes of '1853 Longspur', a strange, Primus-esque instrumental, add an experimental element.

'Still From the Trial' is a more delicate piece — a simple vocal/piano arrangement, sounding almost pretty at times.

In essence, Swarm have delivered a CD that's diverse but not disjointed, strange but still likeable, and always full of surprises.

SHAUN JURY

## WRETCHED SKINNY Happy Jesus Teenage World (Far-Q)

It is a dark day when *RipItUp* music reviewer Kevin List is afraid to attempt the task of enlightening this proud country to the tempting taste sensation that is Wretched Skinny. So I, Matt, am going to attempt a Wretched Skinny review, bearing in mind that I am possessed by hellfire and slightly biased towards the land of aural carnage that WS (that's Wretched Skinny, not White Snake) inhabit.

With song titles like 'Bitch Slaughter on the Farm' and 'The Big Sleaze', you know these three young men didn't attend a good Catholic school. This is gutter hardcore, made for people with a penchant for strong ale and loud guitars. WS are not talentless hardcore morons, however. This debut tape contains enough twists and turns to break the kneecaps of even the most experienced slam dancing speed freak.

The weak point among all the pounding drums, throbbing bass

and buzzsaw guitars is the vocals, which at times fail to convey all the hardcore sarcasm within the lyrics. Still, given the amount of songs WS have squeezed on here, there's plenty to pick and choose from. The kids are a little drunk, but they're all right

MATT JOHNSTONE

## BONEPONY Stomp Revival (Capitol)

From Nashville, Tennessee, Bonepony are Scott Johnson, Kenny Mims and Bryan Ward, three 'good ol' boys' whose Capitol debut utilises a plethora of unusual sounds and instruments. These include the now fashionable mandolin (REM's *Green* perhaps launching this trend), with the more obscure mandola, dulcimer, also, guiro, buckets and Wuritzer piano. Throw the flat-top acoustic guitar, hand-claps and foot-stomps into the mix, and the product is an engagingly southern flavoured folk record, with definite AOR appeal.

'Where the Water's Deep' should be the single, marred only by a slack bridge over its middle-eight. It's a common problem, recurring again on 'Soap' and 'Bleeker St', but Bonepony's refreshing honesty and cliché-free lyrics transcend these minor quibbles. Best 'stomp' record of the year, no question.

MARK DONOVAN

## VARIOUS ARTISTS Rebirth Of Cool Phive (Mercury)

While the rest of the pack are now jumping on the jazzy bizz trying to inject new life into hip-hop, the Rebirth Of Cool team have widened their scope. *Rebirth Phive* would be better titled *The New Wave Of Cool*, because this isn't just a jazz thing anymore.

There's the trip-hop trinity from Bristol — Tricky, Massive Attack and Portishead (with there hard-to-find remix of 'Karmacoma') — doing their thing, brilliantly as always. There's the acid jazz contingent from Jhesila and Norman Cook's Freak Power. There are remixes that warp the originals completely: the prodigy mix of Method Man, LA Funk Mob's jazzy mix of 'Bug Powder Dust', and 'Kosmos' by Paul Weller is whipped, beaten and obliterated by

the Lynch Mob.

It's the new wave of cool, mostly from the UK side of things, because that's where things are finally hotting up and evolving, rather than moving sideways. But you do get the Beastie Boys, MC Solar, United Future Organisation and Kruder and Dorfmeister in there. Although the one flaw is most of the tracks are a few months old, this is a strong compilation that will dominate your summer nights.

JOHN TAITE

## ANTISEEN Noise For The Sake Of Noise (Dog Meat)

This record contains antisocial messages projected from Antiseen towards the youth of today. Antiseen play loud, dirty, outta tune punk rock (or should that be drunk rawk?). Instead of the usual cropped, bleached, skater hair, Antiseen drape themselves in the apparel of the auto mechanic — dishevelled leather, unkempt, torn denim and steel capped boots. Not only do Antiseen hate society and use rude words, but they look as if they do as well (pretty important).

The music on *Noise for the Sake of Noise* is noise for the sake of noise, in the loudest and nicest (nastiest?) way possible. Amidst the jewels that are Antiseen's originals there lurk a whole heap of raucous smelly covers of bands like the Ramones, Trashmen, Roky Erickson and the immortal Mr GG Allin. On top of all this you get 11 bonus songs, eight of which are from the LP *We are Going to Eat You*. To prove their heart's in the right place, I'll leave you with some of Antiseen's wise words: 'Keep America clean... kill a hippy.'

Go, Antiseen, go.

MATT JOHNSTONE

## GAVIN FRIDAY Shag Tobacco (Mercury)

Gavin Friday is Bono's old mucker, whom we last heard from on the title track to *In The Name Of The Father* (his was the 'In the name of whisky / In the name of hell...' bit). Produced by Bomb the Bass' Tim Simenon, *Shag Tobacco* is dripping with a snake-eye cool and the type of lounge lizard lyricism that Bryan Ferry lost long ago. His vocals have a Leonard Cohen sense of haunting

gloom about them, as they wander through the twisted, weird format of electro-cabaret. 'Little Black Dress' is the stand out, with diving synths and baritone sax: 'Here she comes, like a child with a gun,' it starts, and then proceeds to blow you away.

Gavin Friday lives in a world similar to the smacked-out, Dixieland nightclub in *Killing Zoe* — it's dark and seedy, permeated by weird and wonderful sounds. Maybe it's the sleaze that makes me think that. There's sleaze aplenty, like when he breaks into sniping German on the street-walking transvestite tale, 'Dolis' ('Mother-fisting friends say romance is cheap / So it's time for Eve to put Adam to sleep'). *Shag Tobacco* is a brooding, late night, down the darkest streets in town.

JOHN TAITE

## DEMONIAC Prepare For War (Evil Omen)

'Lay down your souls for the gods / Rock and roll metal takes hold in the deadly black hole / Riding hell's stallions, bareback and free / Taking our chances with raw energy!'

This classic line pretty damn well sums up the mighty destructive force that is Wellington's Demonic. It's a crying, devil worshipping shame a band of this calibre has to look overseas for a record deal, because this dynamite of a CD is perhaps the best piece of metal fury that has ever crawled forth from New Zealand. The songs range from the anthemic ('Return of Darkness and Evil') to the num-crushing ('Birth of Diabolic Blood'), with enough unholy screams and atom bomb drumming to shame even the most hardened death metal fiend. This doesn't mean *Prepare for War* is a typical death metal record — Odin forbid. What we have here is unholy war metal. Raise an iron clad fist, clutch a broadsword, and let forth the blood curdling cry: 'Death to false metal!'

As an afterthought, I have decided to include the band members' names, so they can be carved into 'rock', to be worshipped and venerated by metal youth for all time. Prepare the fire, mighty Andromolech, Heimdall and Magus. May your raid on Heaven's gate prove successful.

MATT JOHNSTONE

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