

G Love



G LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE

Coast To Coast Motel (Okeh/Epic)

The post-modern roots critic's delight. No wonder they're called Special Sauce: heavy dub, delta blues, rap, boho folk, Capt Beefheart, Alex Chilton and *Exile on Main St* — all goes into the gumbo mix, and is simmered down to a tasty rich concentrate. It sounds as if they're making it up as they go, but that's due to producer Jim Dickinson, the Memphis legend who knows how to capture the moment — and when to leave it be.

WILLIE NELSON The Greatest Hits

(Columbia)

Willie is the master, of both singing and songwriting, but he eased off the latter after his breakthrough *Red Headed Stranger*, in the mid-70s, and the massive success of his covers album *Stardust*. This is a generous, if obvious, budget overview of the last 20 years of Willie's career. It shows his musical eclecticism (Broadway standards, western swing), the highs of his writing ('Me and Paul', 'Crazy') and his interpretations (Leon Russell's 'A Song for You'). But it must have been strong weed that made him think duetting with Julio Iglesias was a good idea.

JOHN HIATT Walk On

(Capitol)

Writing on the road has been good for Hiatt. He likes to shake things around musically, which means the odd mis-hit such as the last album (great songs, shame about the band). Here he's produced another excellent set of songs and does them justice with a band of character and adaptability. The songs tell of restlessness and hard-won wisdom, and typically the ballads are strongest. Inspirational line: 'I'm sitting on the toilet with my sunglasses on...'

VARIOUS ARTISTS For The Love of

Harry: Everybody Sings Nilsson (MusicMasters/Triton)

Nilsson was a beloved singer/songwriter best known for 'Without You' and 'Everybody's Talkin' (neither of which he wrote) — and his boozy friendship with John Lennon. His Tin Pan Alley love of songwriting reached beyond what was fashionable or hip. Hopefully this loving showcase of his songs (by friends such as Ringo, Brian Wilson, Randy Newman and other mere mortals) will send people back to Nilsson's big-hearted originals. Hint: *Pussy Cats*, produced by Lennon, is just a lost masterpiece from the notorious "lost weekend".

JAMES McMURTRY

Where'd You Hide The Body (Columbia)

Like Daddy, Texan novelist Larry, James is very literary. But like Leonard Cohen, McMurtry is a morose singer/songwriter whose work scans better than it sings. His imagery is matched by Don Dixon's atmospheric production. But McMurtry's expressionless voice lets the songs down, as if he's bored with his own material.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Tower Of Song:

The Songs Of Leonard Cohen (A&M)

Playing Leonard Cohen is a sure way to get rid of unwanted guests (me) at 4.00am. For those who can never get past his doom-filled voice, these versions bring out the poetry and melodies in his songs. The usual tribute album rent-a-crowd is here (Sting, Elton, Bono) and they do

Len justice, particularly Aaron Neville (in MOR country mode) and Willie Nelson's spiritual reading of 'Bird on a Wire'. But the best Cohen tribute is still Jennifer Warnes' *Famous Blue Raincoat*.

JIMMY LAFAVE

Buffalo Return To The Plain (Bohemia Beat/Global Routes)

Saving the ballad — and the buffalo — from extinction is the lacerated larynx of Jimmy Lafave. He can squeeze meanings and emotions out of a song its writer didn't know was there. His approach to a ballad is revelatory, and as unique as Aaron Neville. But his rockers are still generic — and he needs stronger material than he can write, which is why his Dylan-heavy *Austin Skyline* made such an impact. For the converted.

SHAVER

Unshaven: Shaver Live At Smith's Olde Bar (Zoo/BMG)

Billy Joe Shaver has a face like 40 miles of gravel road and a voice to match. He's a legend as a songwriter, a hero to Willie Nelson and

Waylon Jennings since the 70s. Here, live and raw in a boozy jook joint, he kicks butt with his classic songs ('Ride Em Down Easy', 'Georgia on a Fast Train') and a rock 'n' roll band Keith Richards would die to be in; holding it all together is Shaver's son Eddy, a blistering guitarist.

VARIOUS ARTISTS Dead Presidents

(Underworld/Capitol)

Blaxploitation flicks have been back for ages, only the soundtracks have changed. This inspired selection returns to the early 70s heyday when Shaft fought it out with Superfly. With cuts from James Brown, Isaac Hayes, the O'Jays, the Spinners, Barry White and, best of all, Sly Stone (overdue for a comeback).

VARIOUS ARTISTS Desperado

(Epic)

Musical nachos, like the movie: chilli and cheesy. With moving norteno from Los Lobos, spaghetti instrumentals from Link Wray and Dire Straits, doodlings from the Latin Playboys, and excerpts of dialogue for those in a Cheech and Chong mood.

JAMES BOOKER

JIM CARREY

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NEW ADVENTURES

SAME HAIR

ACE VENTURA

WHEN NATURE CALLS

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Blessed Union of Souls

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