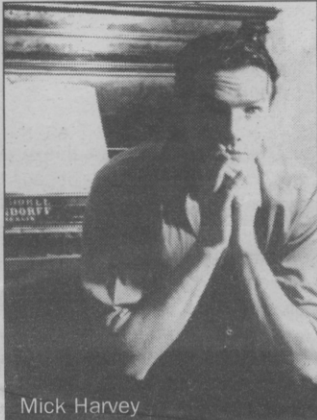


and played by Harvey, and it was recording that which inspired this album. Harvey resolved to translate Gainsbourg's songs into English and present them to an audience that would probably be unaware of their existence. Some of the arrangements are recreations of the originals ("If it ain't broke, don't fix it," says Harvey), others are groovy reworkings, with the multi-instru-



Mick Harvey

mental Harvey playing most of the parts.

Many of Gainsbourg's songs were written for female singers — Jane Birkin (once his young wife, mother of Charlotte Gainsbourg), Juliette Greco, and Bridget Bardot (the subject of the fab closing track 'Initials BB') — and here the wonderful Anita Lane fills the role superbly, complementing Harvey's own sparkling croon.

The highlights are many: '69 Erotic Year', 'Harley Davidson' (retaining a delicious inflection of English-translated-to-French-and-back 'on my Harley David-Son...'), 'Ford Mustang', 'New York USA' ('oooh, so high'), 'Initials BB', and there's nary a dud among them. *Intoxicated Man* introduces most of us to a late great artist, but also a living one too — one who has been too long in the shadow of others. *Tres bien.*

MR J KING

PULP Different Class (Island)

Pulp have been going for over a decade with no success, and for good reason — their albums were a little bit duff. But last years *His 'n' Hers* saw a vast improvement though it was still a little patchy. But the latest, *Different Class*, shows Pulp have pulled their socks right up.

Pulp have a slightly 80s synth/guitar/violin sound, with 'Your name is Deborah' type lyrics and, the best bit, every second song zooming off into a rapturous chorus. Take just one listen to 'Mis-Shapes', 'Common People', or 'Disco 2000', and you'll think you have died and gone to pop heaven. Pulp write

anthems like the Pet Shop Boys used to write, but now their only competition comes from *Phantom of the Opera*.

The songs are little tales of floral wall papered, 2.5 kids, headboard banging suburbia — the exact opposite of Suede's glamorised metaphorical version. Perhaps the quintessential Pulp line comes from 'I Spy': 'My favourite parks are car parks / Grass is something you smoke / Birds are something you shag / Take your "Year in Provence" and shove it up your ass.'

It's beautiful Brit-pop done well. Toss your Blur away, Pulp are in a different class — better tunes, better words and better wardrobe. Bloody essential, album of the year stuff.

MITCHELL HAWKES

THE AMPS Pacer (4AD)

The Amps are, in form, essentially the Breeders minus two (guitarist Kelley Deal and bassist Josephine Wiggs) and plus two (guitarist Nate Farley and bassist Luis Lerma), with two remaining (vocal/guitarist Kim Deal and drummer Jim Macpherson). They sound a lot like the Breeders too. This was originally supposed to be a solo album, and was being touted as a lo-fi version of the Breeders. Kim's slammed her sweet mark all over it, anyway. After all, it's *that* voice, and she's playing it like a fancy fiddle left, right and centre here — demented caterwauling on 'Tipp City', almost growling on

'Full on Idle', and pretty harmonies willy nilly.

The demanding hollers on 'Empty Glasses' set the standard for any potential Amps fan — 'Where's the waitress? / Where's my other shoe?' is enough to tell you this ain't music for wimps who worry about smudging their lipstick when they drink. The cryptic 'Bragging Party' (every line a personal mystery only its writer has the key to) is a bass-driven, harmony-drenched highlight of the album. At the other end of the scale you have the topsy-turvy cow-punk of the aforementioned 'Full on Idle'. Then there are plenty of songs like the opening 'Pacer', that remind you of when *Last Splash* came out, and you played it all summer long.



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