



Cowboy Junkies

deftly swipes a couple of lines from a nauseating 60s Bee Gees ballad to use as the bridge in 'Sleeping Dogs', the sole straight-ahead rock track on the album. Otherwise, the only non-original is a Pet Shop Boys number which she performs with just acoustic guitar backing. Other arrangements are equally intriguing, while decidedly more complex.

Despite a few moments which border on the precious, there is much about *The Garden* to suggest Merrill Bainbridge is a fertile new talent.

PETER THOMSON

COWBOY JUNKIES

200 More Miles (BMG)

This double CD set is 20 live tracks from a decade of Cowboy Junkiedom. As a 'warts and all' collection, it also works as a wonderfully accomplished and comprehensive 'best of'. There are plenty of the kind of covers Cowboy Junkies do such justice to, and have all but claimed as their own ('Me and the Devil' and 'Sweet Jane' being prime examples) by infusing them with the unique brew of gossamer 'n' blues that is their trademark. The band's own songs include the instant classic 'If You Were the Woman and I Was the Man',

and the gritty 'Murder, Tonight, in the Trailer Park'. The understated air of these versions allows them to lodge into the subconscious with minimum ease, making this perfect night driving, catnapping, or reading music.

The lowest moment is the lengthy spoken intro to 'Cause Cheap is How I Feel', which is a tale about a pigeon shitting in lead vocalist Margo Timmins' hair. It rambles on long enough to drag you from any reverie you may have blissfully slipped into, even if it is only to work out what the hell she's muttering about. The uncredited version of 'Johnny B Goode' that ends this collection is the only attempt to get dirty and heavy, and it proves why the Junksters usually don't try to.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

WAYNE MASON

Between Frames (Raging Goose/Driving Wheel)

One of the A-team of New Zealand songwriters finally produces his first solo album. Towards the end of the Warratahs, the writers were dancing to different drums. Wayne Mason was leaning towards the upbeat, with Cajun influences; Barry Saunders favoured the evocative Kiwi bal-

lad. The acoustic pop of Mason's 'Tightrope' is a precursor of this album — and an indication of how good it should have been. The songs are the work of a master craftsman, with verses and choruses full of memorable hooks and melodies, and middle-eights to give them an energy burst halfway. They captivate you, once you get past the production which seems aimed at mainstream rock radio. Until the melodies take hold, the exquisite acoustic ballads ('Senorita', 'No Questions Asked') get lost inside the engineering. 'Nature' and the Warratahs had real character and subtle charm; with more faith in the strength of its songs, this album would have been a Kiwi classic.

JAMES BOOKER

ALICE IN CHAINS

Alice In Chains (Columbia)

After listening to Alice In Chains imaginatively titled latest album, the scales fell from my eyes and I was converted. After trying not to like the poor wee buggers for a number of years because of 'Would', I decided to let bygones be bygones. The Chains (as they're possibly called by their fans) certainly don't do anything very original

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- 173 MC OJ & Rhythm Slave, Jimmy Barnes, Angels, Puddle, Rumblefish, Hummingbirds, Metallica, Pogues, Deborah Conway, Yes, Salad Daze, EMF.
- 175 Exponents, Verlaines, Snapper, Nemesis Dub Systems, Mojo Nixon, Bjorn Again, Queen Latifah, SMAK.
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