



Hammond Gamble

(record review cliché #3), but maybe that's why they're so lovable. Instead of disappearing off into mindless looped guitars and wacky tunings (à la the kings of toss, Sonic Youth), the Chains just play loud, slow, sad rock songs. The slowness of the songs is the big plus for Alice in Chains. Whilst other bands may be noisier, or grungier, or poppier, the Chains are the slowest. But not only are AIC slow, they're also kinda heavy in a groovy, melodic way. Standout track: 'Shame on You.'

KEV LIST

LLOYD COLE
Love Story
(Mercury)

I've long felt alone having a soft spot in my heart for Lloyd Cole, with or without his Commotions, and always allowed his releases to lodge themselves quietly, albeit unforgettably, in the walls of this private place. The Eastern twang of his last album still reverberates there to this day, even though I didn't consider it a favourite on its release: I hope the same thing will happen with this album, but at the moment its being drowned out by my longing for the return of the older, sans Eastern twang style of songs like 'Lost Weekend' and 'No Blue Skies'.

I don't know what's come

between Lloyd and I, but all of a sudden he seems like a bit of an old man — one need listen no further than the saccharine first track, 'Trigger Happy', to reach this conclusion. Nevertheless, the sweetness of his vocals often belies the cutting edge of gems such as (from 'I Didn't Know That You Cared'): 'If I gave you some petrol would you make yourself useful?', which means there's got to be some life left in the silver tongued devil yet. Still, if he can't sell this album on his own merits, I wager Chris Isaak fans will boost sales when they mistake our Lloyd for their own hero in the cover photo.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

HAMMOND GAMBLE
Plugged In and Blue
(Scoop De Loop)

THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS
Roll of the Dice
(BMG)

CHUCK PROPHET
Feast of Hearts
(China)

THE MAVERICKS
Music for All Occasions
(MCA)

Local bluesman Hammond Gamble's first live album is a frustrating affair. Recorded some years back at the Gluepot, it pairs Gamble up with a crack band (including Hello Sailor's Stuart Pearce on keys), and they let loose in fine style on a number of blues and soul classics — Ray Charles' 'Believe to My Soul' and Sam Cooke's 'Bring it on Home to Me' among them. A few Gamble originals are on show — the finest two tracks of the album being 'Daylight Robbery' and 'Who Did All This to Me' — but not nearly enough. His beautiful ballad 'Stranger's Girl' is notable by its absence. Throughout, Gamble sings and plays with real fire, but really, *Plugged in and Blue* only whets the appetite for new material from one of our most underrated

and, lately, little heard artists. All up, this live outing has the feel of one of the songs on display here — Dylan's rarely heard 'Groom's Still Waiting at the Altar'.

From a bluesman who's released too few records to a blues band that's released too many. *Roll of the Dice* sees the Fabulous Thunderbirds minus Jimmy Vaughan, and much of the excitement and distinctiveness seems to have gone with him. Singer and harp man extraordinaire Kim Wilson does his valiant best, but it's pretty much by-the-numbers stuff — even resorting mid-album to a cover of 'Here Comes the Night'.

Ex-Green on Red man Chuck Prophet's third solo album, *Feast of Hearts*, is similarly unlikely to win itself a larger audience. It's fine for what it is (Tom Petty influenced heartland rock), but it often sounds as if he's got it down too pat, so that despite there being some great songs here ('Battered and Bruised', 'Too Many Angels' and 'Longshot Lullaby' especially), they remain strangely unmoving. Recent solo shows in London have, however, been stunning. A name to keep an eye on.

The best left till last? Well, not tonight. The Mavericks' *Music for All Occasions* pairs country ballads with jazzier numbers, and it all sounds like it was recorded in 1950 (which means MCA Nashville has spent a whole heap of money on it), as it attempts to balance vintage music and contemporary attitude. They'll probably fade away quietly, but then, I thought that about kd Lang!

GREG FLEMING

DOWN
Nola
(Warners)

On a dark evening in a dark garage a dark collection of shady characters created some demonic grooves inspired by the impetuous imps of smoke and booze. Among this motley collec-

tion of sinister shady characters were various members of metal legends Pantera and Corrosion of Conformity. Now this ginormous all night jam session has been expanded into the very brutal, very dark, and very heavy *Nola*. On *Nola* the listener will hear loud Sabbathian and Purplian jam sessions that occasionally turn into songs, and some that sorta stay jam sessions. However, as I'm partial to marmalade, this is all mighty fine; and I'm not alone in finding *Nola* an awesome work of awesome heaviness — Scott Ian from Anthrax loves the metallic heaviness located on *Nola*, and so should you (providing you're inclined towards heavy metalliness).

KEV LIST

JANE SIBERRY
Maria
(Reprise)

There's certainly room to move around in Jane Siberry's seventh album; in fact, you probably won't be able to keep still. With the music recorded by a top notch cast of players over three days, and the vocals recorded over Jane's favourite segments later, *Maria* has a delectably jazzy spontaneity. Jane's spirits are often infectiously buoyant, and her sad side comes with a salve of nature that makes even loss seem beautiful.

Divided into two parts, *Maria* concludes, after a two minute break, with the 20-minute track 'Oh My My', where the album's recurring childlike themes are brought to the fore via excerpts from 'Puff the Magic Dragon' and 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'. The inclusion of these lines makes for the only snag in an otherwise divinely smooth journey.

The angel has come down to earth, but she's so ethereal I wouldn't mind betting someone had to tie her to the mic stand to stop her floating off on a wave of the heady atmosphere she's created.

BRONWYN TRUDGEON

MENSWEAR
Nuisance
(Laurel)

So, the Camden clothes-horses rush in and record an album. But hang on, aren't they just an image band? Don't they need to be called the best new band in Britain first? *Nuisance* sounds like they were asking themselves these questions over and over. Well, at least for half of the time, for the rest of the album they just got on with being a band and the results are markedly better

Opening track is average, then there's a horrible redone version of 'I'll Manage Somehow' (get the single for the raw sneer). Then there's 'Sleeping In', and there's no bloody excuse for sounding like the bloody Monkees.

Five tracks in and we're finally getting somewhere. 'Daydreamer', that catchy bastard of a song, still makes me smile when Johnny Dean sings: 'Breeve deepah, daydreemah.' 'Being Brave' is a successful attempt at the archetypal string section smoothie. 'Hollywood Girl' and the new single 'Stardust' are both akin to the Supergrass school of rock. But the real highlight is 'Around You Again', which really gets the Brit-pop glands firing — great energy, great melodies and great chorus.

Menswear count the influenced as their influences. They're a Brit-pop mongrel made up of Pulp, Blur, Supergrass and Suede. And like the super-modern TV on the album cover, if they stand still they'll be out of date within a couple of months. But *Nuisance* is entertaining for the time being.

JOHN TAITE

NOFX
I Hear They Suck Live
(Fat Wreck Chords)

Genuine punk bands always sound best when recorded live because then the listener can excuse the poor production and

fuck-ups — not that anything's wrong wiv the production on this wee batch of distilled pleghm. NOFX sound like bloody decent chaps who like to have a good time and believe the audience should have a good time also. However, what can be charming and cheeky if heard once can become irritating upon repeated listenings by grumpy, miserable windbag reviewers. Yet, there is a definite market out there for NOFX, and you may very well be in that market. Do you like the Dead Kennedys, but not really their politics? Do you have an impish adolescent sense of humour? Do you enjoy wanking and beer (not at the same time, you might spill some!). If you answered yes to two or more of these questions, go pick up NOFX and pogo till your pants fall off.

KEV LIST

VARIOUS ARTISTS
Working Class Hero:
A Tribute to John Lennon
(Hollywood)

The reason I like the sort of tribute albums everyone else loves to hate is you can sing along to the songs without worrying about obscuring the vocal, as it's almost never as good as the original. Take Blues Traveller's cover of 'Imagine', for example; the reverence with which people always cover this track is well evident here. It's what ruins the song every time.

Faithfulness mainly beats innovation, although Red Hot Chili Peppers open the proceedings well with their take on 'I Found Out'. My favourite is Flaming Lips' 'Nobody Told Me'; as a match of artist and lyrical thematic, it is only equalled by Scott Weiland tearing his lungs out on the Magnificent Bastards' 'How Do You Sleep?'

It's a shame Grant Lee Buffalo aren't present, given the similarities between Grant Lee Phillips and John Lennon's voices. Still, there are plenty of takes here that make you swear they have

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